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Chinese diaspora and Western Australian nature (Perth region): A study of material engagement with the natural world in diasporic culture

Li Chen
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**Chinese diaspora and Western Australian nature (Perth region):
A study of material engagement with the natural world in diasporic
culture**

This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Li Chen

**Edith Cowan University
School of Arts and Humanities**

2017

ABSTRACT

Based on an ethnographic study of the everyday practices of diasporic Chinese residents of Perth, this project focuses on the relationship between the ecologic environment and diasporic Chinese cultures in contemporary Western Australia.

With the acceleration of globalization, studies in diaspora have increasingly absorbed geographic ideas. Research on the relationship between ecology and humankind has thrown new light on discussions of diaspora. However, there are few in-depth studies addressing the construction of diasporic place and space with an engagement of the material world. Considering the relative absence of the natural world as a serious subject in contemporary diaspora studies, the starting point of this project is to explore the interactive relationships between place, space, and diasporic people via their everyday experiences. What is the meaning of nature to Chinese people living in Australia? How do they communicate with the natural world in their daily life and what is the dynamic relationship between the people and the environment?

In order to find the answers to these research questions, I adopt sensory ethnography, multispecies ethnography and sensory studies of food as the major approaches. As an insider ethnographer, I have examined diasporic multisensoriality through the ethnographic practices of interviews, observation, filed documentation (notes, photos, sound recordings), film documentation (video documentation of abalone harvesting in chapter 8) and self-reflective composition within a dynamic assemblage of human and nonhuman agentic beings. Sensory studies of food provide a way to understand the dynamic relations between the materials in diets and Chinese people on individual, ethnic and diasporic scales. Along with the theoretical themes of place, space, food, perception, memory and imagination, this research traverses diverse ethnographic disciplines as an academic practice.

In this research, I present several typical cases of everyday spatial practices, abalone recreational harvesting, and Chinese vegetable gardening. As an ethnographic study, the project has involved more than twenty specific participants. In the last two years, I have interviewed groups, individuals and families, and joined them in wine tasting, cultural celebrations, abalone harvesting and vegetable gardening. In addition,

due to my previous background in documentary filmmaking, I have made an illustrative film on the topic of abalone harvesting.

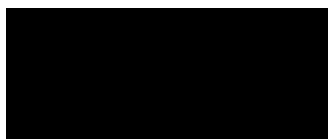
Through the research on the cases, I found that there is an intimate, dialogical and reciprocal connection between the Chinese diaspora in Perth and the local physical environment. With the embodied engagement of the natural surroundings in their daily experiences, Chinese people living in Perth have gradually converted their perceptions of nature, which are also under the influence of traditional cultures. Acting as a space and an agent, the ecological environment has become familiar and domestic in the people's diasporic experiences. Additionally, daily practices in the material surroundings have also transformed the people's self-perceptions through their senses, reflections and attitudes toward the natural world. At the same time, the natural environment is impacted upon in myriad ways by the activities of diasporic Chinese.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Date: 18/04/2017

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the origins of this project, its background, the research questions, the significance of the study and the structure of this thesis. It highlights the aim, value and expected contributions of this project.

1.1 Origin of the research

This project originates from the life story of my father, who was born in 1940 in Indonesia as the oldest child of a Chinese family. Before their life in Indonesia, my grandparents escaped from China in World War Two, although they loved their hometown of Guangdong so deeply. They were Hakka, which means “guest families” in Chinese language, with a unique cultural heritage of war-forced migration for centuries, also called ‘Chinese Jews’ (LaCroix, 2009, p. 65). My father was encouraged to go back to China on his seventeenth birthday after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. After a short course in Chinese language in Guangzhou, he chose Sichuan for his university study, and later as his place of residence in China. Sichuan is well known as a rich productive land. There he married my mother, a local Sichuan woman. After they retired, my parents moved back to Guangdong, the hometown of my grandparents.

For my father, Guangdong is the ancestral home of his origin while Indonesia is the home he most remembers. Sichuan, where he has lived for over thirty years, is the hometown of his real life. I found in his story three details that are indeed attractive. The first: in my childhood, he always described his impressions of Indonesia, with all kinds of typical local foods. Although I have not yet visited the country, I have tried, hundreds of times, many famous Indonesian dishes with him in Chinese Indonesia restaurants. I can feel that Indonesian cuisine, such as Nasi goreng, Gadu-Gadu and Rendang daging, is intensely flavoured. These strong flavours condense all his memories of living with his parents because my grandfather passed away only several years after my father left Indonesia.

The second is, as a teenager, the only reason he chose Sichuan was for its abundant natural resources. In over thirty years there, his most interesting experience was associated with fishy grass (*Houttuynia cordata*). This wild herb is generally used as an antiseptic in Chinese traditional medicine. Its flavour is fishy but it is very popular for a Sichuan-style salad. In Sichuan, a simple way of identifying a native person is whether he or she eats fresh *Houttuynia cordata*. I cannot imagine how hard it was for him when he tried the herb for the first time. However, after only a few years, he carried it with him to add to every dinner, just as “real” Sichuan people do. The small leafy plant captures all his memories of Sichuan.

The last detail is that he has been in Shenzhen, Guangdong for over ten years. During every Chinese New Year, following a local tradition, he displays two big pots of kumquat trees in front of the main entrance of his house, as the pronunciation of kumquat in Cantonese is similar to the Chinese word “good luck”. Additionally, he has herbal soups before meals as a Cantonese does. However, on his dinner table, there is always a salad of *houuttuynia cordata* and his favourite fruit after meal is an Indonesian banana.

His complex affection for the three places is also embodied in his backyard in Guangdong. He grows *houuttuynia cordata* in a large-sized garden bed, with seeds brought from Sichuan because no Cantonese people grow it. In the middle of the garden, there is a banana tree from Indonesia surrounded by several pots of Indonesian spices and herbs. There is an inseparable relationship between plants, especially those represented in foods, and my father’s diasporic experiences, although I have to admit that his experiences are very personal. These stories instigated in me a desire to explore the relationships between material nature and diasporic culture, through human multisensoriality, in everyday practices.

After eight years in Western Australia, I understand more about my father’s life. The unique Mediterranean climate, Western Australian natural products and the multicultural society of WA fascinate me. The starting point of my project is to investigate the dialogical influences on the development of local Chinese diasporic culture through material engagement. In fact, the two-way communication between the natural world and the practices of diaspora involves numerous kinds of social, cultural, ethnic, diasporic, and even geographic research. On the basis of the previous literature and within the scope of ethnographic studies, this dissertation aims to

present a comprehensive understanding of diasporic everyday experiences through the presentation of a living case study of Chinese people in Western Australia.

1.2 Background

Contemporary Australia is a multicultural society. Cultural diversity has shaped and transformed its national history and modern society. Asian immigrants, especially those with Chinese backgrounds, “have been involved in everything that Australia has done” (Rolls, 1996, p. 599). The history of Chinese immigration to Australia in considerable numbers can be traced back to the nineteenth century, even before the gold rushes (Gittins, 1981, p. v). Discontented at home where there were wars or poverty, Chinese immigrants came to Australia as labourers in search of a better life.

By 1861 Australia had at least 38,000 Chinese. Nearly all were men, and it may well be that one man in every nine in Australia was Chinese...Mining was still their main pursuit but thousands of other Chinese were laundrymen, hotel cooks, fishmongers, furniture makers, and pastoral workers. (Gittins, 1981, p. v)

On the Australian goldfields, Chinese differences “in the general mode of living were as great as those of nature and appearance” (Gittins, 1981, p. 112). Gittins (1981) comments that “throughout the long and often bitter years of their sojourn they were persecuted and victimised at almost every turn” (p. 111). Beginning in the year 1901, the White Australia Policy was central to Australian thinking for upwards of 60 years until “the relaxation of discriminatory immigration controls against non-Europeans in 1966” when Harold Holt became Liberal Prime Minister (Kee, 1988, p. 1). The Chinese went through many vicissitudes before achieving general acceptance by mainstream Australian culture. Australian and Chinese scholars, such as Gittins (1981), Eric Rolls (1992, 1996), Ann Atkinson (1985, 1991), and Jan Ryan (1995a) have examined significant Australian Chinese communities created by different socio-economic groups of Chinese immigrants during the past two hundred years. Their

studies present stories of Chinese people that recognize the qualities of the immigrants and their immense contribution to what is modern Australia.

In Western Australia, Chinese immigrants fulfilled many of the labour requirements of the colony after 1829. Anne Atkinson (1985, 1991) and Jan Ryan (1995a) have undertaken notable research into Chinese immigrants to Australia, especially to WA in the nineteenth century. They depict the contribution of the early Chinese labourers in providing services and products to benefit Western Australians and their struggling lives under poor material and political conditions. Atkinson remarks that the strong sense of community spirit was important in “helping individual Chinese overcome the indignities of discrimination in a racially hostile environment” (Atkinson, 1985, para.19). This spirit enables the Chinese to “retain and practise many of their cultural traditions whilst participating and sharing in the development of a wider community” (Atkinson, 1985, para.20). Ryan focuses on the small, but geographically dispersed, Western Australian Chinese population in the local social and physical environment. She observes that the small and isolated Chinese population in Western Australia demonstrates “the uniqueness, the complexity, and the diversity of Chinese experiences overseas” (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 155).

This previous research highlights the experiences of early Chinese immigrants principally from Chinese mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. However, most of these studies focus either on the past two centuries (Gittins, 1981; Sinn, 1998) or are geographically limited to eastern and southern parts of Australia (Ang, 2001; Chan, 1986). My research concentrates on the last twenty-six years from 1990 to 2016, with the latest Chinese immigration wave to Perth, and focuses on exploring the changes in Chinese diasporic values in terms of the Perth’s environment. This research focuses on this period and the mainland Chinese group, particularly those from Chinese coastal provinces, because, according to Australian government statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998, 2013), since 1990 the number of immigrants from northeast Asia (mainly China) to Australia has increased rapidly. Compared with twenty years ago, in recent years, more immigrants have come from the Asian counties as skilled individual professionals, rather than as members of a migrating family. Additionally, in China, with development of foreign trade, people living in the coastal provinces have a migrant tradition. Moreover, as shown in the

statistics regional population growth in Australia, between 30 June 2013 and 30 June 2014, “Perth had the fastest growth (up by 2.5%), ahead of Darwin and Melbourne (both 2.2%)” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, 'Key points' section, para.3). Therefore, it is valuable to research the fast growing diasporic Chinese groups from the Chinese mainland in contemporary Perth.

At the heart of my research is an investigation into the relationship between the Chinese diaspora and the local environment of the Perth region. There is a need here first to clarify several definitions, including diaspora, diasporic space, and cultural studies of nature. Diaspora, which is bound to culture and cultural identities, has been the subject of numerous studies of transnationalism (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, p. 4). Most existing diasporic theories are related to historical, economic, political and social factors in order to account for the causes and effects generated by the large scale of migration in the global age. Notable works, such as a study by Bhabha (1994), focus on the hybridity of diasporic identity in the name of “the third space” from a postcolonial perspective. Clifford (1994, p. 302) critiques the concept of postcolonialism as an unsuitable approach for contemporary studies in the complex discourse of diaspora. Instead, he examines diaspora in terms of travelling and in reference to the scale of globalization. Brah defines diaspora through an analysis of the concepts *border* and *location*. She argues that, in this context, “diasporic identities are at once local and global” (Brah, 1996, p. 196). On this basis, she (Brah, 1996, pp. 208-209) concludes that “diaspora [*sic*] space” is a conceptual construction where the diasporians are represented as natives. This position is reflected in the previous research into Chinese diaspora. It aims at understanding diasporic Chinese not just the people per se, but also their adaption to local social and national contexts (Charney, Yeoh, & Kiong, 2003, p. xx).

Ien Ang (2001, p. 13), as a non-Chinese speaking person of Chinese descent, specifies that, of course, “all migrants ultimately have to forge an accommodation with where they find themselves relocated, and to reconcile with their situation here”. Her argument echoes Brah’s definition of “diaspora space”. More recent studies do recognize that space and place are the pivotal concepts in understanding ideas of diaspora. Barker argues that in contemporary social and cultural studies, “space is a construction and material manifestation of social relations that reveals cultural assumptions and practices” (Barker, 2003, p. 353) and the places are not only

geographical locations but also focal points “marked by human emotional investment and identification” (Barker, 2003, p. 373). From the perspective of human experience, Tuan argues that “place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other” (Tuan, 1977, p. 3). Although, in studies of Chinese diaspora, Ma and Cartier apply these concepts to definitions of diasporic space as a “place-centered and network-based” space (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, p. 9), their emphasis is still on social networks (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, pp. 7-11).

In the previous literature I found that entangled relationships between diaspora and nature have not figured significantly in the discussion of diasporic practices; however, some implicit descriptions lie in various relevant studies. Clifford (1994, p. 308) states that autochthonous people stress “a ‘natural’ connection to the land” in his discussion of diaspora’s resistance to the hostland. In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Brah outlines her memories of home in Uganda with a detailed description of nature such as pond, frogs, rain and the red soil (Brah, 1996, p. 2). In the stories of early Chinese immigrants to Australia, Gittins (1981), Rolls (1992, 1996) and Jan Ryan (1995a) present the intimate relationship between Chinese and Australian natural worlds through detailed description of living conditions and everyday experiences. Although many scholars admit the importance of engagement with the natural world in diasporic experiences, only isolated instances in the diasporic literature, such as Tsing’s (2013) research into mushroom foraging by Japanese and Lao Americans, provide explicit insight into the adaptive and interactive relationship between diasporic peoples and material nature. Following these pioneering studies, through some typical cases such as abalone recreational fishing and Chinese vegetable gardening in Perth, I argue that nature should feature in the categories under discussion in diasporic cultural studies. In previous studies it has featured as a conceptual framework; in my study, it features as a material category, focusing on everyday experience and use of nature. Giblett (2012, p. 4) points out that nature should be included within cultural constructions because it is “the biological processes that make life and culture possible” and the natural is “a surface of inscription for the cultural”. Similarly, Ryan discusses “the material turn” in his argument of botanical remembrance with “a material-affective understanding” (J. C. Ryan, 2017, p. 214). He insists that plant materiality is “not [an] inert substance to manipulate but [an] animate matter to encounter dialogically” (J. C. Ryan, 2017, p.

218). Instead of the previous views of the natural world as “passive materials or symbolic structures”, the “material turn”, in the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, eco-cultural studies, and ecocriticism, approves the role of agency of environmental materiality and the influences of “material forces” (J. C. Ryan, 2017, p. 219). These precepts indicate the direction of my research on “dialogic encounter” (J. C. Ryan, 2017, p. 218) between diasporic people, natural materials and places.

Moreover, I adopt this focus because in contrast to some other researchers, I am an ‘insider ethnographer’ or the “indigenous ethnographer” in Clifford’s work (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 9), a Chinese diasporic person living in Perth who is studying the fellow members of the Chinese diaspora. This role allows me to establish rapport with the diasporic community in order to get closer to the multiple realities in the field. In addition, I can achieve a self-reflective knowing from the everyday practices I engage in with the participants in this project. However, it might also be noted that as an insider ethnographer, I am required to shift between the roles of researcher and group member, as required by different observational modes.

1.3 Research questions

This research is designed to respond to several questions:

[1] What is the concept of nature for the Chinese people living in Perth? Put differently, how do Chinese immigrants perceive the natural surroundings of both their homelands and the new place?

For centuries, nature [*Ziran*] has been a sacred concept equated to ‘land’ and ‘home’ in Chinese culture. The Chinese are both a people with a long tradition of migration and one with a deep attachment to their homeland. This seemingly contradictory feature engenders a particular understanding of nature in the relocated people. Thus, this question explores the transformation in their perceptions of nature.

[2] How do the everyday experiences in the embodied nature shape people’s knowing, conception and self-perception?

This question involves the notion of ‘livelihood’ described by Raymond Williams (1985, p. 266), which marks a shift in human attitudes toward the physical

world. Leading from this concept, this question is designed to investigate the way in which the diasporic people communicate with the natural world as well as the influences of the material surroundings on Chinese diasporic cultures through everyday practices.

[3] What is the dynamic relationship between diasporic Chinese people in WA and local environment during the process of relocation and resettlement?

Based on the former two questions, this question involves a general understanding of the interactions between the natural world and diasporic Chinese people in contemporary Western Australia.

1.4 Significance

This project demonstrates that rethinking the relationship between the local environment and everyday practices is clearly crucial to acquiring a better understanding of diasporic cultures. It suggests that diasporic culture is constantly being formed through people's daily lives in relation to the natural world. This project attempts to depict a dynamic relationship between diaspora and the natural world with a broader consideration of the harmonious and sustainable (or destructive and unsustainable) development of both diasporic cultures and the natural world.

This research does not attempt to repeat the immigrant stories of Chinese diasporic groups. It emphasises the importance of the natural world in the relocation of the diaspora because this emphasis is absent or implicit in many previous studies. Its significance is also in its application of sensory ethnography and sensory studies of food to research into diasporic experiences in the scope of cultural studies of nature. This study is not merely a historic perspective but a reflection upon the evolution and inheritance of Chinese culture in the age of globalisation with intensified diasporas. It contributes to the understanding of cross-cultural communications because local Chinese diasporic culture is in fact a melange of Chinese traditional culture and contemporary Australian culture. It also describes an intersection of ideas about the natural world in Chinese, Aboriginal and European views. Moreover, this study of Chinese diaspora is in the context of Western cultural categories of nature. It may

provide a reference both for a deeper consideration of differences between cultures, and particularly for a healthy development of multiculturalism, sustainable development, and environmental conservation in Australia. This project could constitute a small step in the on-going journey of comprehensive observation of cross-cultural communications from different perspectives, especially environmental humanities, with the relationship between diasporic cultures and local nature.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is comprised of ten chapters. The first four chapters (Chapter 1-4) present a general introduction, the literature review, the conceptual and theoretical framework, and the methodology and methods. From Chapter Five to Chapter Nine, I present the ethnographic study of local Chinese diasporic experiences according to a general process through which the new arrivals learn about the environment. This successive process includes the first impression, external and internal spatial practices, connection to the specified natural materials, interaction with the wild nature, and communication with the domestic land.

Chapter One is this brief introduction to this project.

Chapter Two reviews previous literature relevant to the background of this project. In terms of cross-disciplinary research, the literature review overlaps a variety of theories. It sets out two basic approaches, diaspora studies and cultural studies of nature. In the diaspora category, it reviews contemporary research on diasporic cultures, which involve different definitions of diaspora, diasporic space and place. It also includes the paradigmatic framework for diaspora studies such as transnationalism and postcolonialism. Another important part in this category is notable research into Chinese diaspora, especially Australian Chinese, from both historical and geographical perspectives. The other category concentrates on ethnographic cultural studies of nature. It introduces existing studies of culture and nature, from Western European, traditional Chinese and Australian Aboriginal views. It criticises the absence of nature in the current cultural studies while advancing the growing body of eco-cultural studies of nature and environmental humanities.

Chapter Three sets out the conceptual and theoretical framework for this research. The foundational theoretical construction involves ethnographic cultural studies of nature, through which the cultural categories of nature and ideas of diaspora are interpreted and represented in the case study of the Perth region of Western Australia. Within this context, theories of the environmental humanities (e.g. Rose & Robin, 2004), notably environmental philosophy (e.g. Callicott & Ames, 1989) and eco-cultural studies (e.g. Giblett, 2011; J. C. Ryan, 2012), including both Western and Eastern studies are brought together in order to expand the notions of diaspora, globalisation and cultural communication.

Chapter Four is a detailed introduction to the methodology and methods applied to this project. It discusses ethnography's methodological suitability to this research. It also depicts contemporary local Chinese diasporic groups and the natural environment of Perth in order to explain the importance of this field to this study. In addition, it outlines the specific methods used in the project, such as interviews, participant observation, and the use of video recording of fieldwork.

Chapter Five describes the views from the participants and my own reflections on the discussion of engagement with nature in the everyday life of the Chinese diaspora. Chapter Five focuses on domestic and suburban spatial practices. The theme of this chapter is 'nature is as space'. It analyses the relationship between material nature, diasporic space and place. It refers to a common sense of space in China. Accordingly, spatial practices such as the outdoor activities of walking, weekend barbecuing, or water sports are meaningful to Chinese people living in Perth.

Chapter Six interprets the changing view of the traditional Chinese concept of Feng Shui, from a metaphysical theory to a daily spatial practice. The traditional principles of Feng Shui, notably in Daoism, are explained at the beginning of this chapter. Following this, the chapter examines the shift in the application of these principles to contemporary society. The main focus is the new role of Feng Shui in making harmonious environments, with both external and internal human and ecological bodies.

Chapter Seven investigates local natural resources of wood, jewels and wines, which have attracted Chinese consumers throughout the long history of Australian-Chinese communications. It introduces the Chinese cultural traditions of appreciating

specific timbers, jade and wines. Along these subthemes, this chapter discusses separately local natural products: jarrah, sandalwood, gemstones, pearls and wines to demonstrate the intimate connection between the material environment and the Chinese people.

Chapter Eight presents a typical local case of recreational abalone harvesting with the Chinese participants. It explores how the Chinese culinary culture of abalone harvesting is transformed in WA's material environment. It introduces the traditional Chinese view of abalone with its social, economic values and concentrates on the fishing experiences of local Chinese with a comparison of different food cultures. This chapter highlights the role of the natural world in the transformation of Chinese perceptions of nature and of self. With the topic of abalone, according to the data I have collected as video-records over the last three years, I have also made an illustrative documentary film to strengthen the research focus of this project.

Chapter Nine examines the relationship between the land and the diasporic people expressed in the landscape modification represented by Chinese vegetable gardening. It reviews the gardening experiences of WA's early Chinese settlers from the last century. In contrast with the hardship and misery that the early Chinese gardeners confronted to make a living, contemporary diasporic Chinese subjects grow vegetables in their backyards as a way of relaxation. This chapter articulates the profound influence of the natural world on the gardening practices and on conceptions of the embodied environment.

Chapter Ten provides a general discussion of the findings. It summarises how local material nature influences and converts the diasporic Chinese people's perceptions of nature and self via daily practices to a further discussion of the dialogical relationships between the diaspora and material nature. It also describes the academic contribution, and limitations of this project.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In accordance with the research questions clarified in the introductory chapter, this thesis discusses the relationship between diasporic groups and the local environment through people's everyday practices. From this perspective, the project crosses between the two research fields of diaspora and cultural studies of nature, within the framework of ethnography. In accordance with this research focus, there are two sections in this chapter, including a review of contemporary diaspora studies and a review of recent eco-cultural studies of nature.

This chapter begins with a review of the research into diaspora by Cohen (1987), Clifford (1994), Bhabha (1994), Gilroy (1997) and Brah (1996). It analyses different understandings of diaspora, diasporic spaces and diasporic places in relation to concepts and theories such as exile, home, memory, transnationalism, postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism and hybridity. It focuses on recent attention to space and movement in geographical research, as well as on the intersections between diaspora and material culture. Following the review of research on general diaspora theories, there is a discussion of specific studies comprising explicit or implicit understanding of the environment with diaspora experiences. Developing the concept of "companion species", Anna Tsing's (2012, p. 141) work on emplaced connections and the relationships between human and non-humans is essential to this project. The natural and cultural entanglements in previous work by Heather Goodall, Alison Cadzow and Denis Byrne (2010; 2013) in migrant place making in Australia is also reviewed in the section. The review of Chinese diaspora studies is mainly based on Australian scholars Gittins (1981), Rolls (1992, 1996) and Ang (2001). This section also emphasises the works of Atkinson (1991, 1995) and Jan Ryan (1995a, 1995b), which focus on Chinese immigrants to Western Australia.

In regard to the controversial concepts of nature in cultural studies, the second section of the literature review discusses the nature/culture divide as analysed in the fields of the environmental humanities and ecocultural studies. Works by Giblett

(2012), Rose and Robin (2004), connecting people, place and space are foundational to my study of dialogical relations between local environment and diasporic culture. Moreover, the concept of ‘livelihood’ developed by Raymond Williams (1989) is a key theory related to the everyday experiences under discussion. In addition, there is a focus on indigenous ideas of nature in both Australian Aboriginal and traditional Chinese contexts, mainly from Daoist cosmology and geomantic practices (Feng Shui). In this thesis, Chinese traditional cultures refer to the cultures of ancient China because some basic principles in the traditions remain profound influences on contemporary Chinese societies (H. Ma, 2012, p. 9).

The significant literature on food studies and sensory studies, which are essential to this research, are not discussed in this chapter; relevant works are addressed in the next chapter, with other foundational concepts and the theoretical framework.

2.2 Research on diaspora

This section discusses the existing literature on diasporic studies and the discourses of globalization, transnationalism and hybridity. It explicates various ideas of diaspora from the perspectives of identity, community and social relations as well as the critique of the paradigmatic framework for diaspora research, such as nationalism and post-colonialism, highlighting the importance of the environment. Following this, there is a review of research on Chinese diaspora from historic and geographic contexts.

2.2.1 Ideas of diaspora

The word “diaspora”, stemming from the Greek words “speiro” (sow) and “dia” (over), refers to migration and colonization in ancient Greek thought (Cohen, 1987, p. ix). In the histories of earlier diasporic movements, such as those of Jews, Africans and Palestinians, the term encompasses ethnic exile and collective nostalgia for mother countries. In the article “Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of

homeland and return” (published in the first issue of the journal *Diaspora*), Clifford (1994, pp. 304-305) glosses theorist William Safran, who notes the six main features of diaspora: “a history of dispersal, myth/memories of homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (Clifford, 1994, p. 305). He criticises the view of nationalism as it confuses diasporic identity and immigrants because national narratives cannot “assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere” (Clifford, 1994, p. 307). However, diasporic culture is not “consistently antinationalist” as “nation and nation-state are not identical” (Clifford, 1994, p. 307). Accordingly, Clifford declares that diasporic cultural forms “are deployed in transnational networks built from multiple attachments, and they encode practices of accommodation with, as well as resistance to, host countries and their norms” (Clifford, 1994, p. 307). This resistance as “a troubled relationship with the host society” has been regarded by Cohen as one of the features of a diaspora because of the experiences of “antagonism and legal or illegal discrimination” in the hostlands (Cohen, 1987, p. 186). In Cohen’s, Clifford’s and many other scholars’ views, the tense relationship between a diasporic group and the immigrated place is mainly situated in the identities represented in politics, economy, culture and ideology. Although it does not pay adequate attention to the relationship between a diaspora and the ecological environment, most existing literature, taking a similar approach, has concentrated on the social ecologic connection between identification and location, including homeland and hostland in a global age. However, in the studies, the material and embodied natural world – including the non-human species – is still regarded as a sub-category of human society.

In recent transnational studies, diaspora is also applied to people who voluntarily migrate in globally spatial flows such as labour, trade, imperial or cultural groups (Cohen, 1987, p. x), with no colonizing purposes or other reason, such as fleeing persecution. In Cohen’s (1987, p. xi) view, some diasporic groups, such as the Jews and Chinese have dual identities. Jews are both a victim diaspora and successful merchants in worldwide trades with “a high level degree of cosmopolitanism appropriate to our global age” (Cohen, 1987, p. xi). The Chinese were “a labour diaspora” and “a successful trading diaspora” (Cohen, 1987, p. xi). The changing

cultural identities surrounding diaspora are related to the acceleration of globalisation. Since globalisation “has increased the range of sources and resources available for identity construction”, globalisation provides a context for the crisis of stable identities, which have appeared as natural and taken for granted (Barker, 2003, p. 213). Khachig (1991, p. 5) points out that diaspora involves forces and phenomena related to the transnational movement of capital, cultures, populations and corporations. Once the collective identity of diaspora is assumed, there is a need to “interrogate the national context” and to “question about the global context” (Khachig, 1991, p. 5). Brah (1996, p. 243) echoes that “dispersed across nation states, diasporic collectivities figure at the heart of the debate about national identity”. In her view, diasporic identities are networks of “transnational identifications encompassing ‘imagined’ and ‘encountered’ communities” (Brah, 1996, p. 196)

Besides the collective identity of “an imagined community” (Anderson, 2006), in Hall’s (1997) understanding, “diaspora [sic] identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (p. 58). For him, a diaspora is not a fixed cultural identity, but “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (p. 52). Clifford refers to Boyarins’ account of diasporic cultures, which are not “preserved by being protected from ‘mixing’ but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing” (Boyarins, as cited in Clifford, 1994, p. 323). Clifford (1994, p. 323) comments that it is to be “both a mode of (historical experience) and a model for (contemporary hybrid identities)”. In contemporary diaspora research, the existence of identity hybridity is widely accepted. In a conversation with Rutherford, Bhabha (Rutherford, 1991, p. 211) indicates that hybridity is important because “it bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like a translation”. Baker (2007, p. 16) cites Bhabha’s definition of “the Third Space” as the space “produced by the collapse of the previously defining narratives of modernity based on colonialism, class and patriarchy”. The idea of postcolonialism leads a vast number of studies into discussion of specific ethnicities, especially Asian diasporians, who were mainly indentured laborers a century ago (Ang, 2001; Ngan & Chan, 2012; J. Ryan, 1995a, 2003, 1995b). Amongst the literature, Clifford (1994, p. 302) critiques the concept of postcolonialism as unsuitable to contemporary studies in the complex discourse of

diaspora. Instead, he examines diaspora in terms of travelling and in reference to the scale of globalization.

By introducing “travelling” and geographic ideas, more studies have turned to the notions of diasporic space and diasporic place, which has expanded the definition of diaspora. Gilroy (1997, p. 341) argues if attention is turned “towards the spaces in-between”, theories of culture will be defined and work better with the help of diaspora concepts. Clifford argues that culture and cultural identities have increasingly evolved with the practices of modern travel (1997, p. 19), engendering “travel as a term of cultural comparison” (p. 39). Culture and cultural identities are being understood “in terms of travel relations”, not only in terms of place (Clifford, 1997, p. 25). Barker interprets Clifford’s view as including two elements: “people and cultures that travel” and “places/cultures as sites of criss-crossing travellers” (Barker, 2003, p. 255). Gilroy (1997, p. 331) suggests that the idea of diaspora should be evaluated in “the significance of the scattered processes, against the supposed uniformity of that which has been scattered” as the notion of diaspora is incompatible with “the harmony of people and places”. Barker defines diaspora “as a dispersed network of ethnically and culturally related peoples” (Barker, 2003, p. 255). The network, in Brah’s (1996, p. 183) definition of diaspora, is explained as “configurations of power that differentiate diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another”. Therefore, “diaspora [*sic*] space” is regarded as a conceptual category, “inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but also by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous” (Brah, 1996, p. 209). Recent studies of diaspora argue that more attention should be given to “the basic geographic concepts of space and place” (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, p. 6). Diaspora is studied variously as “a process, a group of people, a geographic area and a spatial network” (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, p. 7). A place, in Ma and Cartier’s emphasis, is explained as an “incubator that contains the basic ingredients of [social] networking” (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, p. 10). In most of the existing works, diasporic-related concepts of nature, place, and space are abstractions and generalizations. I propose a deeper consideration of the relationships between people, place and space in Chapter 3 of the conceptual and theoretical framework. The following review provides an analysis of engagement with nature from research into diaspora. These concepts and ideas are fundamental to this project.

2.2.2 Views of connections with the ecological environment

“Mr Chau ‘fell in love with Perth at once.’ He liked its spacious streets, its bright shops, its beautiful gardens and its meandering river, its tempo” (“Chinese likes ‘us blokes’,” 1944, para.1). This poetic narration describes a new Chinese arrival’s first impression of Perth’s environment. Wherever a person migrates, there is always something natural attracting him, touching him, changing him, and communicating with him. This something in nature may be large like a mountain or as tiny as a seed; it possesses vital importance in the formation of his new living space and the relocation of his traditional cultural values.

Although close relationships between diaspora and nature have not been seriously figured into the theorisation of diasporic space, some implicit references are made in various relevant studies. Two established principles are the ideas of space and place in diaspora research. Even though Clifford does not explicitly discuss the notions of “place” and “space” in terms of spatiotemporal practices, he distinguishes diaspora from travel, which he defines as a practice only undertaken for a short period. Diaspora “involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home” (Clifford, 1994, p. 308). In addition, he argues that diaspora has a dialectic relationship with “the norms of nation-states”, the “indigenous”, and the “especially autochthonous” (1994, p. 307). The terms of ‘dwelling’, ‘home’, ‘indigenous’, and ‘autochthonous’ implicitly point to the context of the natural world.

A further example is in Brah’s work *Cartographies of Diaspora*. For Brah, who has had ‘homes’ in Asia, Africa, America, and Europe, the key point for the understanding of diaspora and “diaspora space” is politics. Despite the absence of the idea of the natural world in her new concept of “diaspora space”, she outlines her memories of home in Uganda with a detailed description of nature:

The hours spent as a child combing the Shamba at Naviwumbi; monitoring with incredible patience every detail of the metamorphosis of a pond of tadpoles into frogs; playing in the warm rain that would begin to beat down in huge bursts, quite out of the blue, and dry up just as suddenly; the aroma of the red soil after the first rain drops, and the sheer pleasure of climbing trees to pick mangoes or jamuns; the gentle murmur of the Nile as it springs out of Lake Victoria; journeys through the lush green forest lining the road from

Jinja (my hometown) to Kampala; the trials and tribulations, as well as the joys, of adolescence...all this and much more was part of my very being. (Brah, 1996, p. 2)

She regards these memories as an important part of the political character of “nation”, one of the driving forces in constructing “the multiaxiality of power” (1996, p. 16). However, the diasporan’s sense of the natural settings, not only contributes to the formation of politics of location, but also has profound influence on everyday practice in both original and host places. Diasporic sense of nature is able to be entered into dialogue with the diasporans and is agentic, not merely the backdrop, for the diasporic practices.

Other examples that support the argument of the implicit influence of the natural world in diasporic space can be seen from some studies of diasporic Chinese. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Chinese laborers (also known as ‘coolies’) and tradesmen escaping from wars or poverty immigrated to almost every continent of the world in search of a better life. Gittins (1981) depicts the general living conditions of the Chinese diggers in the Australian goldfields. Besides a complete difference in physical appearance from Europeans, particularly in relation to diet and eating habits, Chinese workers did not always make use of the local food resources of the hostland despite them being plentiful. Gittins wrote that although mutton was cheap and bountiful, the Chinese workers seldom took it in their diet as the odor was offensive. “They lived instead on beans and vegetables – they were past masters in the cultivation of all vegetables” (Gittins, 1981, p. 113). Following this, Gittins presents a very interesting case study of how Chinese count their lunar calendar through planting lotus lily roots to remind themselves of necessary agricultural activities:

If planted before the birthday of the Buddhist goddess Kwan Yin [Guan Yin], which falls on the sixteenth day of the second month of each lunar year, the flowers will rise above the leaves in the pond, but if for some reason the day is missed and the planting delayed, the flowers will form and open under the large, round leaves...so that they would know when to sow which vegetable seeds and when to expect the harvest. (Gittins, 1981, p. 114)

In this case, connected to the natural world, the diasporic group of early Chinese in Australia experienced alienation in the new place. Researching Chinese diasporic people in Perth, WA, also during the era of cheap labor (the earliest Chinese worker came to WA in 1829, long before the gold rush), Jan Ryan (1995a) sketches how enterprising Chinese gardeners modified the landscape along the South Perth foreshore: “the land was crisscrossed with hand-dug canals, and pitted with wells. Vegetables, varying seasonally, made a changing kaleidoscope of color, their organized rows contrasting starkly with the unruly bamboo which flanked the gardens” (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 11) (Figure 1).

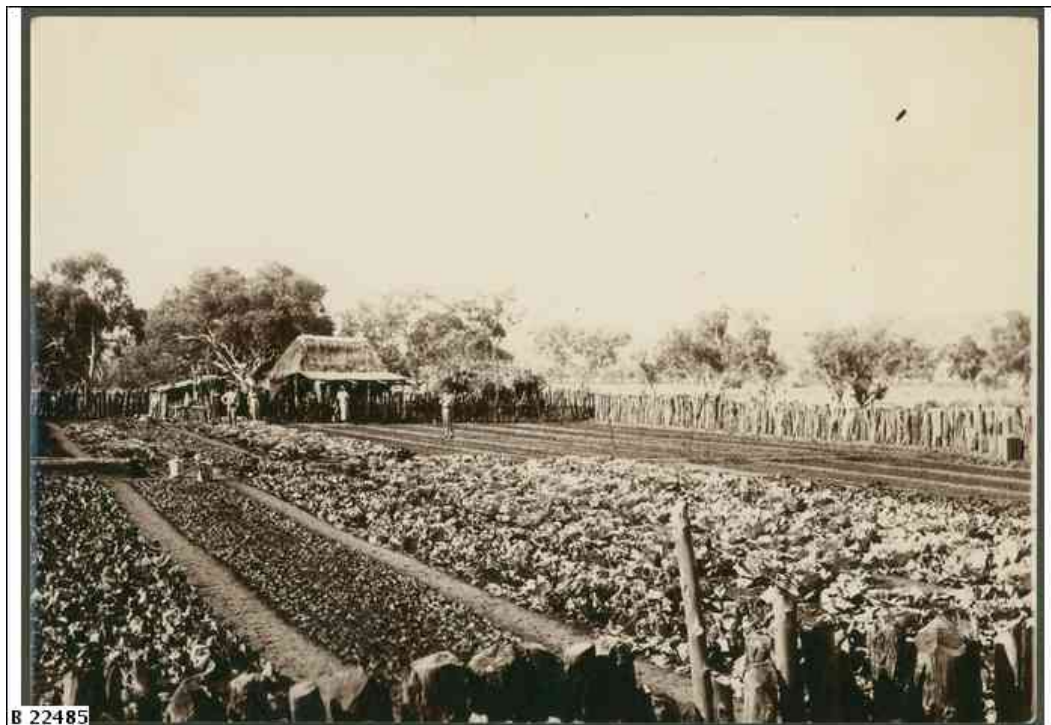


Figure 1: Early Chinese garden in Australia ("Unidentified Chinese garden," 1901)

Ryan (1995a, p. 77) argues that the attractions of this area were the natural conditions of “moderate weather” and “Western Australian waterways”, which were suitable for “traditional Chinese farming methods”. The adaptive and intimate relationship between diaspora and the natural world provides an insight into the understanding of diasporic space. In the existing ideas of diasporic space, which

mostly involves the concepts of diasporic and non-diasporic identities, material practices of livelihood ought to figure more prominently in the understanding of 'space'.

Other works, such as those of Goodall, Cadzow and Byrne (2010, 2013), which focus on the relationship between "placemaking" and transnationalism, provide an insight into diasporic experiences in the Australian national park environments. George River National Park, in the heart of the cityscape of Sydney, is one of the pre-colonial Aboriginal occupation sites in New South Wales. In the studies of recent Arab and Vietnamese migrants living nearby, the concept of "placemaking" is defined with "a special significance in the context of immigration" (Byrne & Goodall, 2013, p. 65). Place or locality seem to be assumed as outcomes of social interactions through ordinary diasporic activities related to "memory, emotion, imagination and sociality" (Byrne & Goodall, 2013, p. 65). The notion of "placemaking" is also applicable to the research on Chinese diaspora in WA. For instance, there is an extended discussion of "sense of place" (Convery, Corsane, & Davis, 2012) in the review of cultural studies of nature. Moreover, depending on their original places, Australian migrants experience "subtle or dramatic differences in climate, seasonality, vegetation and fauna" (Byrne & Goodall, 2013, p. 65). In the Mediterranean environment of Perth, Chinese immigrants from various regions have both similar and individual experiences. Thus, it is necessary to continue with a review of research into Chinese migrants to Australia.

2.2.3 Studies of Australian Chinese diaspora

My research considers overseas Chinese migrants adapting (or not) to the local environment of the Perth region in W.A. Previous research has aimed to understand how diasporic Chinese people adapt to local social environments (Charney et al., 2003, p. xx). In this review, besides these studies of their adaptation to a new social situation, in order to provide a brief account of present studies of the connection between Chinese diaspora and the natural world, I endeavour to list more literature linking the environmental engagement with Australian local Chinese diasporic lives. Eric Rolls

(1996) declares that early Chinese immigrants had significantly contributed to the development of Australian society:

For years Chinese cooks and gardeners improved life on stations all over Australia, even in the remotest areas. Chinese fishermen introduced the first fresh fish to towns and cities both on the coast and inland; in Queensland Chinese farmers grew the first rice, maize peanuts, pineapples and bananas and demonstrated what could be done with these crops. (Rolls, 1996, p. ix)

The contact between China and Australia can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty in fourteenth century (Rolls, 1992, p. 6). As Rolls (1992) proposes that “the world is known by trade” (p. 2), and the earliest Chinese adventurers discovered Australia from the natural world through a growing trade in sealskins and sandalwood long before the gold rushes (p. 19). Mining provides further extraordinary evidence to show the relationship between Chinese migrants and the local environment. Much of the literature that reviews the history of Australian-Chinese migration considers mining in detail because “for almost fifty years Australia had presented itself to Chinese peasants as a golden mountain” (Rolls, 1996, p. xii), “the new gold mountain” after America (Gittins, 1981, p. 47). By 1861, there were at least 38,000 Chinese in Australia, and “it may well be that one man in every nine in Australia was Chinese” (Gittins, 1981, p. v). In Gittins’ and Rolls’ works, the Chinese “gold mountain guests” are portrayed “as people in their own right” (Gittins, 1981, p. v). They tell stories of “the excitements and hardships of the diggers” living in the goldfields, “a sensitive sketch of Chinese life and attitudes in gold rush Australia” (Gittins, 1981, p. v).

Compared to the eastern goldfields, at the same time in Western Australia, the numbers of Chinese were small:

Western Australia did not experience a large influx of Chinese in the nineteenth century. In response to an alleged shortage of labour, Chinese were introduced into the colony in small numbers as a cheap labour force for the benefit of pastoralists, merchants and entrepreneurs. Some five thousand Chinese worked in Western Australia in the nineteenth century, with the peak in 1897, when an estimated 1937 Chinese were in the colony. (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 14)

In 1829, Moon Chow, the first recorded Chinese, arrived in Fremantle. Eighteen years later, another twenty Chinese came from Singapore (Atkinson, 1985). Chinese labour was recruited not directly from China but from “the labour transit centre of Singapore” and, since the 1870s, by “sagacious merchants” (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 18). Most indentured Chinese labours arrived with little possessions, “scant understanding of the language or customs of their new land, totally isolated from family and friends, and lacking the mutual support networks available to many of their countrymen who settled in the eastern colonies” (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 40). Atkinson (1991) studies the earlier Chinese (1847-1947) in Western Australia from the perspective of the relationship between the change of labour and capital related to the Chinese community and mainstream white society. Ryan focuses on the early Chinese market gardeners with their individual personalities represented by the stereotype images of ‘John’ or ‘Charlie Chinaman’ (J. Ryan, 1995a, pp. 11-14). In spite of the lack of early Western Australian Chinese in previous historians’ writings, Atkinson and Ryan refer to “surviving archival sources from the nineteenth century” to describe “group solidarity against oppression and ostracism” or:

individual struggle against hardship and loneliness in the harsh virgin bush and the hostile frontier townships, against discrimination and the lack of communication with Europeans, as well as the hostility and inter-clan rivalry in their relationships with Chinese from other dialect groups. (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 14)

These studies not only concentrate on the Western Australian region, but on the context of the global movement of labour and capital with the growth of worldwide markets during the era. Alongside the historical data derived through their research are their methodologies for anthropological studies of Chinese diaspora. In my project, it is meaningful to learn from the previous literature in order to explore how the maintenance of cultural traditions involves interaction with the physical environment of the Perth region through the diasporic practices of everyday life.

Another considerable aspect in the research of contemporary Chinese diaspora is that new generations of Australian-born children of Chinese ancestry are indistinguishable from that of the Australian majority in their manner of speech,

values and behaviour. Ngan and Chan (2012) examine the factors which influence the formation of diasporic Chinese identities including:

East and West (culture), past and present (time), here and there (place), global and local, and centre (China) and periphery (Chinese diasporic communities)... The interaction or intersection of all these factors has led to a situation in which the construction of identity for migrants and their children often occurs in a state of liminality—that is, a feeling of being beyond, suspended in-between cultures, or in borderlands. (Ngan & Chan, 2012, p. 2)

They remark that for Australian-born Chinese, the identity of hybridity contains the two distinct concepts of “double consciousness” and “third space”. The idea of ‘double consciousness’ refers to “the hybrid character of modern ethnicity and its profound effect on diasporic communities” (Ngan & Chan, 2012, p. 174). The concept of ‘third space’ borrowed from Bhabha, and taken up by Hall and Ang, implies “a peculiar space of in-betweenness” (Ngan & Chan, 2012, p. 176). It is also parallel to the notion of ‘diaspora space’ involving the same elements of ‘in-betweenness’ and ‘hybrid identities’. Ien Ang, being non-Chinese speaking person of Chinese descent, describes herself as “suspended in-between: neither truly Western nor authentically Asian” not only because “it is a comfortable position to be in”, but also because “its very ambivalence is a source of cultural permeability and vulnerability which”, in her view, “is a necessary condition for living together-in-difference” (Ang, 2001, p. 194). For the next diasporic generations, the new place for their parents, including the social and physical environment, becomes an indigenous homeland. They can only recognise the ancestral place from their parents’ memories. The following section reviews the literature on cultural studies of nature, significant for researching diasporians, diasporic identities and diasporic space through the studies of the relationships between humans, place and space.

2.3 Cultural studies of nature

As my research focuses on the relationship between material nature and diasporic people and cultures, this section reviews Western views of the relationship between culture and nature, focusing on some notable Australian contributions to the Environmental Humanities (Environmental Humanities is the broad category in which Ecocultural studies falls). It continues the discussion of “livelihood” developed by Williams (1985) in the field of ecocultural studies. The following discussion pays attention to indigenous thinking from both the Australian Aboriginal and ancient Chinese traditions on the relationship between human beings and material nature.

2.3.1 Nature and culture

Nature, as Williams declares, is “perhaps the most complex word in the [English] language” (Williams, 1976, p. 219). This term is conceptualised in many ways in different disciplines. Some scholars address the growing consciousness that “culture-nature dualism is foundational to Western modernity and thus seminal to the West’s encounter with the non-Western world” (Brockwell, O’Connor, & Byrne, 2013, p. 1). Rose and Robin argue that nature is “a problematic term” because of the nature/culture divide and it challenges our understandings (Rose & Robin, 2004, ‘Connection with nature and place’ section, para.1). For them, “major ecological change, much of it in crisis, is situated across the nature/culture divide” (Rose & Robin, 2004, Introduction section, para.2). Modern societies are constructed as “a dual war – a war against nature and a war against the natives” (Rose & Robin, 2004, ‘Connection with nature and place’ section, para.2). Cultural reconciliation is “vividly present in Australian public discourse” but the war against nature is overlooked partly because “it is consistent with the cultural imperative of human mastery over nature” (Rose & Robin, 2004, ‘Connection with nature and place’ section, para.2).

The question of the connection with the natural world is also made problematic in diaspora research, as ‘social relations’ is more vividly presented than ‘ecological relations’. By contrast, environmental anthropologists such as Ingold (2000, p. 5) insist that “social relations” are actually “but a sub-set of ecological

relations”. Byrne, Brockwell and O’Connor (Brockwell et al., 2013, p. 3) remark that numerous ethnographic works demonstrate the productivity of the intersection of ecology and the humanities, a view forwarded earlier by Merchant in her classic work *The Death of nature* (1980). Furthermore, Anna Tsing (1993, 2005, 2012, 2013) also contributes to studies of the relationships between human and non-human species. Her work on the adaptations of marginalised peoples and cultures to the local environment is instructive for my research into Western Australian diasporic culture and the natural world.

Amongst the varied Western discussion of the culture/nature divide, Wilson in his book *The culture of nature*, declares that “nature is a part of culture” (Wilson, 1991, p. 12), refusing the dichotomy between nature and culture. Extending the definition of “a cultural category” proposed by Paul Hirst and Penny Woolley (1982, p. 160), Giblett emphasises in many of his works that nature is a cultural category with a history and a politics. Giblett (2011, p. 15) deconstructs classic Western ideas about nature (Table 1).

Table 1: Five Cultures of Nature

<i>Cultures Of Nature</i>	<i>Of, Characterized By</i>
First	First, Aboriginal Peoples, Living Organism; Worked nature; Hunting, Gathering, ‘Fire-stick Farming’, Dwelling; Immediate Nature
Second	Herding, Tilling; Over-worked, Mediated Nature; Agriculture, Pastoralism, Mining, Architecture; Living Machine; Mercantile Capitalism
Third	Engineering, Industry; Worked-over, Modern, Represented Nature; Dead Machine; Industrial Capitalism
Fourth	Communication Technologies; Hyper-worked, Hyper-modern Nature; Colonisation and Commodification of the Electromagnetosphere and of Orbital, Extra-Terrestrial Space
Fifth	Postmodern Nature; Bio- and Psycho-symbiotic Livelihoods in Bioregional Home-Habitats of the Living Earth

(adapted from Giblett, 2011, p. 23)

In the ancient Roman view since Cicero, there is a distinction between the first nature of the natural raw material world and the second nature of agricultural people's world. Cicero relegates the first nature of indigenous people to second nature. First nature, or 'wilderness', is also the raw material for second nature:

We sow corn, we plant trees, we fertilize the soil by irrigation, we dam the rivers and direct them where we want. In short, by means of our hands we try to create as it were a second nature within the natural world. (Cicero, cited in Hunt, 1996, p. 58)

Some modern Western work echoes Cicero's distinction and consider culture to be a "man's secret adaptive weapon" (Greenwood & Stini, 1977, p. 393) with the core sense of survival. Giblett (2011, p. 15) indicates that "first nature in Cicero's terms is partly the first 'culture of nature' of first peoples". He criticises Cicero's view for not making a distinction between nature and first nature and argues "there is a pre-human natural world to acknowledge and respect but there is also a first nature (and culture, the culture of first people) that is and was worked by Aboriginal people that also needs to be acknowledged and respected" (Giblett, 2011, p. 22). In his view, "Aboriginal peoples certainly had an impact on the natural environment" (Giblett, 2004, p. 209). There are kinship relations between people and land, humans and non-humans because "they descend from common ancestors" (Giblett, 2004, p. 215). Land is family to Aboriginal people as well as a written history of "Aboriginal country" (Giblett, 2004, p. 215). Giblett (2004, pp. 215-216) remarks that in addition to "the first environmentalists in the world", Aboriginal people were also "the first ecologists to theorise the earth-household and practice earth-home economics". He concludes that "first nature (and culture) is immediate nature, second nature (and culture) is mediated nature, third nature (and culture) is represented nature, and the natural world is 'unmediated nature'" (Giblett, 2011, p. 25).

Similarly to Giblett's view, Dunlap (1999) argues that 'native nature' is a part of Anglo culture in the two-century histories of the settler countries of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. For Dunlap, nature is "the culture's understanding of the land and the living creatures on it at the level of unaided

observation” (Dunlap, 1999, p. 2). He roughly divides nature into the substances of “plants, animals, landscape, and climate” (Dunlap, 1999, p. 4). Of those, landscape is a continuous construction shaped by generations “from the land, the culture, and experience” (Dunlap, 1999, p. 4). People in a cultural picture of the landscape can be considered as “active forces” rather than “tourists” and “shaped by the land” (Dunlap, 1999, p. 12). This view considering the natural world as a role of agency in human cultural categories is a key element in the study of the relationship between diaspora and the natural surroundings.

The concept of “livelihood” developed by Williams involves a closer relationship with nature in terms of “direct and practical ways of life” (Williams, 1985, p. 267). Giblett (2011, p. 240) argues that livelihood is the “third party” between culture and nature that establishes the relationship between them. In Giblett’s understanding, livelihood is “both cultural and natural” as it “deconstructs the culture/nature binary and hierarchy of culture over nature” (Giblett, 2011, pp. 240-241). Barker comments that significant cultural studies in the work of Richard Hoggart (1957), Edward Thompson (1963) and Raymond Williams (1989) share in common “a stress on the ‘ordinariness’ of culture” including “the active, creative, capacity of common people to construct shared meaningful practices” (Barker, 2003, p. 60). Williams (1989, p. 4) explains that there are two senses of the word ‘culture’, the common meanings of “a whole way of life” and the meaning of the arts and learning, which are “the special processes of discovery and creative effort”. Hence, he regards culture as ordinary, “in every society and in every mind” (Williams, 1989, p. 4). Developing these studies, Giblett (2012) argues that “nature is ordinary too”. He (2012, p. 4) purports that the concept of nature is actually a cultural construction in Williams’ definition of culture, “a whole way of life”, because nature includes “the biological processes that make life and culture possible” and the natural is “a surface of inscription for the cultural”. He (2012, p. 7) describes the ordinary nature “as the stuff of work and everyday life”.

Emplaced connections inform cultural studies of nature with the highlight on the importance of human rights alongside ecosystem rights, and shifting the focus from the individual being to relationships between beings. The general concern in this shift is the importance of space and place to the identities of individuals and communities. Distinct from the concept of space, the idea of place provides “a

profound centre of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties and its part of the complex processes through which individuals and groups define themselves” (Convery et al., 2012, p. 1). Convery, Corsane and Davis (2012, pp. 2-4) argue that there is no clear and universal definition of ‘sense of place’ as it has been explored by various disciplines of human geography (Tuan 1977; Massey 1994; Ingold 2000), environmental and social psychology (Shamai 1991), and social anthropology (Stewart 1996; Ingold 2000; Escobar 2001). Although the concept of “sense of place” is “multitheoretical, complex and contested”, it is a “powerful medium” in the construction of the networks of place, people and events (Convery et al., 2012, p. 6). Particularly, the literature in social anthropology focuses on “the complex nature of places in daily lived experience, approached through what is called ‘thick description’, which aims to understand individual people’s behaviour by locating it within wider contexts” (Convery et al., 2012, p. 4). Central to this perspective is the understanding that “the cultural meanings of landscape are not universal but specific to particular societal groups” (Convery et al., 2012, p. 4). With a consideration of “how people construct their sense of self in place”, Cantrill and Senecah develop a view that “the living and non-living are not distinct and separate domains, social relations encompass more than mere humans” (Convery et al., 2012, p. 4).

Rose and Robin (2004) analyse the “emplaced connections” in Australian scholarship in three main ways. The first is the actual question of belonging, such as the “underside of belonging” by Read (1996, 2000) or “strong new research examining belonging, and interactions with nature, in the city” by Mathews (1999, 2000). The second way relates to globalisation and place. Rose and Robin argue that globalisation seems to “devalue the local in favour of the global, and to offer connection either in virtual space, or through consumption” (Rose & Robin, 2004, 'Connection with nature and place' section, para.4). For them, ecological connectivity is an embodied form that requires people to “acknowledge our connections with indigenous people and with nature; to acknowledge that we are co-participants in earthly reciprocities of being, becoming and dying” (Rose & Robin, 2004, 'Connection with nature and place' section, para.5).

These theories have shed light on my research and built links between diasporic cultures and diasporic everyday practices of engagement of the natural

world. On this basis, it becomes possible to study the influences of local ecological environment through diasporic daily experiences. The next section explains that the study of Chinese diaspora in WA also involves indigenous Chinese and Australian Aboriginal perceptions of nature. These views add values to the integrated diasporic space through everyday sensory experiences.

2.3.2 Indigenous concepts of nature

Australian Aboriginal and ancient Chinese people share a similar view that nature is not a concept opposite to humanity. For Aboriginal people, an individual person and the natural world are not separate categories but “the unity of the people with nature and all living creatures and life forms” (Giblett, 2004, p. 219). Aboriginal Australians believe everything in the world is alive, especially the land, which is “a map of the body” (Giblett, 2004, p. 220). Noel Nannup, a Nyoongar (an Aboriginal tribe in WA) elder, asserts that Aboriginal people believe that “in the beginning the land was flat and featureless and a serpent went through it, creating valleys and hills and special places” (as cited in D'Arcy, 1996, para.8). Nannup said in Nyoongar culture, it is also important that “the bones of a person remain in the final resting place that has been specifically chosen because it is beside this tree, or near that river”, following a “spiritual trail” on the land (as cited in D'Arcy, 1996, para.11). In addition, people “were formed with the hills and the valleys, the water and the sky, the trees and the plants, the crows and the kangaroos, created by the ancestors who gave meaning and life to our world” (Morgan, Mia, & Kwaymullina, 2008, p. 7). From an Aboriginal perspective, “country” is parallel to “nature”, not only the physical land but also a spiritual home. The country, for each Aboriginal person, refers to not just where they live, but who they are (Morgan et al., 2008, p. 7).

Similarly, ancient Chinese tradition see nature as “the all enfolding harmony of impersonal cosmic functions” (Callicott & Ames, 1989, p. 68). Ancient Chinese people believed they could “embody nature” in their “sensitivity” and allow nature to embrace them “in its affinity” (Callicott & Ames, 1989, p. 78). Some Western scholars consider the Chinese philosophy about nature as unique “in having no creation myth” and “genuine Chinese cosmogony is that of organismic process”, “one

spontaneously self-generating life process” (Mote, as cited in Callicott & Ames, 1989, p. 67). With regard to Mote’s insight, Tu argues that “the apparent lack of a creation myth in Chinese culture history is predicated on a more fundamental assumption about reality; namely, that all modalities of being are organically connected” (Mote, as cited in Callicott & Ames, 1989, p. 67). Ancient Chinese people, notably the Daoists, were intensely interested in the creation of the world and the creator. The earliest Chinese literature work, *Shanhaijing*, translated by Anne Birrell as *The classic mountains and seas*, is believed to be a product of a long process of compilation, probably since the 4th century BCE. Although nobody can identify the author of this ancient book, it is regarded as Daoist writing dealing with nature and its characteristics, including plants, animals and ores, “all being features relevant for the ideal performance of Daoist shamans working there” (“Shanhaijing, The classic mountains and seas,” the 4th Century BC, n.d.). In the chapter “The great wildness”, the first humans were created by Nuwa, a goddess with a snake body (this has parallels with the ‘waugal’ in Nyoongar culture), who is one of the living beings existing before humans (Birrell, 2000). This book is an important Chinese classic text which is valuable for the study of early Chinese mythology, religions, geographic landscapes, medicine and cosmologic philosophy (“Shanhaijing, The classic mountains and seas,” the 4th Century BC, n.d.). Lewis regards it as a mythic geography that depicts “the whole of the Chinese world around the theme of mountains and seas” (Lewis, 2006, p. 64).

Joseph Needham defines the Chinese model of the world as “the organismic Chinese cosmos” consisting of “dynamic energy fields rather than static matter-like entities” (Tu, 1989, p. 68). Mote characterizes the Chinese vision of nature as the “all-enfolding harmony of impersonal cosmic function” (as cited in Tu, 1989, p. 71). Tu argues that Mote’s characterization has two interrelated meanings that “nature is all-inclusive and the spontaneously self-generating life process which excludes nothing” (Tu, 1989, p. 71). For Daoists, *tzu-jan* (“self-so”), which is translated into the English word “nature” in modern Chinese, captures the spirit of Chinese cosmology (Tu, 1989, p. 71). Giblett (2008) asserts that the ancient Greeks proposed the concept of nature as an organism. Coincidentally, the Daoist view of body and nature highlights the “conceptualised or metaphorised” body as “the earth with a system of energy-flows” (p. 157). He also emphasises that “acupuncture, Feng-shui and taijiquan are

Taoist arts of health, longevity and well-being for the body and the earth, for the body of the earth” (pp. 178-179).

2.4 Conclusion

Contemporary studies of diaspora are usually guided by theories of transnationalism and globalisation. Research into the Chinese diaspora, especially in Australia, mainly concentrates on the perspective of migration history, cultural resistance, and hybrid identity. Apart from detailed descriptions of the relocated life in research on Chinese migration history, the relationship between diasporic Chinese and the natural world has not been an important factor in the studies of diasporic experiences. In addition, in most of the existing studies of diaspora, there are no adequate notions of embodied and material engagements with the natural world in the concepts of place and space. However, recent studies in the discipline of environmental humanities have thrown new light on the exploration of diasporic cultures. Such research, which emphasises agency, materiality, dialogical quality of nature, provides potentially illuminating perspectives for studies of diaspora via the case study of Chinese in Perth.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Chris Barker emphasises that “a significant strand of work in cultural studies is not empirical but theoretical” (Barker, 2003, p. 30). As discussed in the previous chapters, my project draws on a variety of theories. Its basic theoretical construction involves cultural studies of nature (or ecocultural studies) through which the cultural categories of nature and ideas of diaspora can be interpreted and represented in reference to the Perth region of Western Australia. Within this context, theories of the environmental humanities (Rose & Robin, 2004), environmental philosophy (Callicott & Ames, 1989) and eco-cultural studies (Williams, 1985; 1989; Giblett, 2011; J. C. Ryan, 2012), mainly focusing on Western and Eastern studies of the relationships between humans, place and space, are brought together in order to expand upon notions of diaspora, diasporic place and diasporic space.

This chapter presents nature’s role as agent from the perspective of environmental philosophy. It highlights nature’s influence in the construction of relationship networks between humans, space and place. Notable works on this theme include Jane Bennett’s posthumanist ideas in *Vibrant matters* (2010) and Freya Mathews’ concept of the ecological self.

Moreover, based on an ethnographic study of local diasporic experiences, this chapter reviews the conceptual frameworks of ethnographic studies of senses, multispecies and foods. Sensory ethnography and multispecies ethnography are discussed in both this chapter and the next methodology chapter. In this chapter, the sensory study is presented as the ideas from the perspective of human perception and place, focusing on memory studies in the ethnographic practices. It encompasses sensory memory (Seremetakis, 1994), sensory landscapes (Law, 2001), sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009; Stoller, 1997), bodily memory (Casey, 2000), collective memory (Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012), emotional geography (Jones, 2005), and botanical memory (J. C. Ryan, 2012). Multispecies ethnography is the study of subjectivity and agency of organisms (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010; Ogden, Hall, &

Tanita, 2013). In the next chapter, the methodology of sensory ethnography and multispecies ethnography accounts for a range of academic practices in qualitative research.

Focusing on exploration of abalone in Chinese culinary culture and Chinese vegetable gardening in Australia, previous research in anthropological studies of food is reviewed for sensory studies of food (Forrest and Murphy, 2013) in this project.

Regarding the study of everyday experiences of diasporic community engaged with the material surroundings, the last discussion in this chapter returns to the concept of 'livelihood' by Raymond Williams, associated with the multisensory diasporic experiences in the material surroundings.

3.2 Place and space and human

In cultural studies, it is widely accepted that space and place situate human activities (Barker, 2003, pp. 348-349). Barker indicates that time-geography is applied to "map the movements and pathways of persons through physical environments" (Barker, 2003, p. 348); thus, it is involved in varied social activities that "occur and the constraints which material and social factors place on the patterns of our movement" (Barker, 2003, p. 349). Space and place for Tuan are "basic components of the lived world" (Tuan, 1977, p. 3). Michel de Certeau makes a distinction between space and place: "a place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence" whereas "a space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables" (de Certeau, 1998, p. 117). In his definitions, place "implies an indication of stability" while "the space is composed of intersections of mobile elements" (de Certeau, 1998, p. 117). He argues that space is "a practiced place" because a place is "an instantaneous configuration of positions" (de Certeau, 1998, p. 117). Barker argues that space and place are constructed by "social relations of power" (Barker, 2003, p. 347). Moreover, places are not only geographical locations but also focal points of "human experience, memory, desire and identity" (Barker, 2003, p. 350). From the perspective of human experience, Tuan argues that space is open, free and dynamic

while place is secure and stable (Tuan, 1977, pp. 3-6). He said if space is regarded as “that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). Furthermore, the cultural point of “place”, for Giblett, is not so much its geographic meaning, as it is about nature, a cultural construction involving “biological processes that make life and culture possible” (Giblett, 2012, p. 4). In the discussion of sensory scholarship, Ryan argues that “not solely a space or landscape demarcated by sight, place is a sensory and corporeal topography” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 194).

Based on the above-mentioned views, human, place and space are also foundational elements in studies of contemporary diasporic activities. Bhabha defines the concept of “beyond” as “the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1). In contrast to the diasporic subject’s original sense of exile, contemporary diaspora is understood to involve transnational travel, resettlement in a new place and everyday experiences during the process of geographic relocation. In the establishment of a diasporic space, one of the basic components identified by theorists is the concept of “travelling culture”. Clifford remarks that travelling cultures exhibit “cosmopolitanisms” “by tourists, by oil pipelines, by Western commodities, by radio and television signals” (Clifford, 1997, p. 28). He insists that if culture is the “representable whole form” of an organized accretion of time and space, culture “comes to resemble ... a site of travel” (Clifford, 1997, p. 25). For Clifford, travelling culture also makes a distinction between immigration and diaspora:

Immigrants may experience loss and nostalgia, but only en route to a whole new home in a new place. Such ideologies are designed to integrate immigrants, not people in diaspora. Whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations, it cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere. (Clifford, 1997, p. 251)

As well as involving the concept of ‘travelling culture’, ideas of diaspora are inevitably related to the notions of globalization, a global sense of place, and space-time. Ma and Cartier comment that “space and place are the primordial structural

elements of diasporas, as groups of people must exist, function and interact in space and place” (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, p. 8). They define diaspora as “spatial networks, with selected places serving as anchoring points” and also regard diaspora as “functional spaces”, which are characterized by “the movement of people, capital, goods and information between homeland and hostland or among the places where a diasporic population has settled” (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003). The diasporic space in Brah’s works is “the site where the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is a native” (Brah, 1996, p. 209).

In the framework of ethnography, Pink (2009, pp. 30-33) analyses coherent developments in theories of space and place. The first one is the phenomenological theory of place undertaken by philosopher Edward Casey. Casey regards place as “something *posterior to space, even made from space*” (E. Casey, 1996, p. 14) and asserts that “*places belong to lived bodies* [original italics] and depend on them” (p. 24). Pink concludes that, for Casey, “place is not static” but is constructed as “event”. Second, the meaning of place is gathering of “various animate and inanimate entities”, and “experiences and histories, even languages” (Pink, 2009, pp. 30-31). The geographer Doreen Massey continues the idea that place is secondary to space while “she also challenges the idea of the primacy of place represented in Casey’s formulation” because space is more “contingent and active” (Pink, 2009, p. 31). To understand Massey’s work, Pink (2009, p. 31) suggests three principles: “first, ‘the product of interrelations’; second, ‘the sphere of the possibility of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality’; and third, ‘always under construction’” (Pink, 2009, p. 32). Pink comments that for Casey and Massey, space is primary to the relationship with place while both Casey’s and Massey’s approaches “acknowledge the human and non-human elements of place and suggest how place as event is constantly changing through social and material relations and practices” (Pink, 2009, p. 32). She concludes that the anthropologist Tim Ingold’s definition of place extracts a sense between the former two approaches as “Ingold gives primacy to movement rather than to place” (Pink, 2009, p. 32). Pink (2009, p. 33) comments that if places are “occurring through the intersections and proximities of pathways as they are entangled”, then they are events constituted in “a meshwork of paths”.

Also in the ethnographic research of human and non-human relationship, Ryan (J. C. Ryan, 2011b, 'Processes' section, para.4) considers the place as a process

enacted “through our sensory entanglements.” He argues, “sense of place importantly involves becoming intimate with the plants of my surrounds and through the kinds of bodily encounters I have described” (J. C. Ryan, 2011b, 'Places' section, para.4). The ethnographic theories of place and space, especially the basis that emphasise materiality, entanglements, emplacement, multisensoriality, both human and non-human, offer a valuable framework “to understand the phenomenology of everyday encounters in relation to and as co-implicated with the complexity of global processes” (Pink, 2009, p. 33).

3.3 Nature’s values and agency of nature

In this project, one of the predominant ideas is that nature is an agent in the construction of diasporic space. This notion recurs in the theoretical framework of environmental philosophy, especially the considerations of nature’s influence on human activities. Freya Mathews offers an ecocentric stance on the nature’s values with “three levels of value”. The first level is “background value,” which attaches to things of space-time, “rather than to things as instances of sortals or natural kinds” (Mathews, 1991, p. 118). This value, which enables every physical thing to exist, is the “element of affirmation and fulfilment” (Mathews, 1991, p. 118). The second level is “intrinsic value” (synonym: inherent value). It is identified as the value “embodied in individual selves or self-maintaining systems” (Mathews, 1991, p. 118). Mathews argues that both the first and the second values are “objective and absolute” but the second one is also “subjective” with “a base in the interests of living”. She indicates that “intrinsic value must be included in the realm of ‘fact’ – the traditional fact/value dichotomy is inapplicable to it” (Mathews, 1991, p. 119). From this perspective, intrinsic value is considered objective but is also “built into selfhood” (Mathews, 1991, p. 118). The third level of value is “relative value”. It relates to intrinsic value as an individual value that will “assign positive and negative values to at least some of the elements of the world in which it finds itself” (Mathews, 1991, p. 120). Thus the third value decided by “any environment variable is objective relative to the interests of a particular organism” (Mathews, 1991, p. 120).

In a wider view that culture itself is “one of the principal genetic endowments of human beings”, Mathews argues that culture is “a direct expression of human nature or instinct, the genetically transmitted, biological constitution of the human species” (Mathews, 1991, p. 137). She declares that, although the abstract and symbolic dimension of a society, “a culture may be ecologically informed with elements of its environment” (Mathews, 1991, p. 139). In her view, a culture is considered “a naturally selected instrument of Nature, or participant in the local ecosystem” (Mathews, 1991, p. 139). This argument is valuable for my study of diasporic cultures because the kind of culture in Mathews’ argument, for example, Australian Aboriginal culture, is practiced in “a particular region and a particular set of ecological relations” (Mathews, 1991, p. 139). Diasporic culture is also “in no way opposed to Nature” as this kind of culture “understands and represents our interconnectedness with Nature” (Mathews, 1991, p. 156). Mathews’ arguments also reflect the basic principles of ecocultural studies.

In a similar way, Jane Bennett focuses on “the active role of nonhuman materials in public life” (Bennett, 2010, p. 3). In her understanding, vital materialities are “potentially forceful agents” (Bennett, 2010, p. x). On the basic notion that globalisation enables the “earth itself [to] become a space of events”, Bennett argues that, “the agency of assemblages” of “human and non-human elements” are ad hoc groupings of “vibrant materials of all sorts” (Bennett, 2010, p. 23). The effects of Bennett’s idea is that “emergent properties, emergent in that their ability to make something happen (a newly inflected materialism, a blackout, a hurricane, a war on terror) is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone” (Bennett, 2010, p. 24). Applying this theory to my project, the diasporic space can be regarded as an assemblage. The elements of this assemblage include diasporic people and their social constructions as well as “some very active and powerful nonhumans” (Bennett, 2010, p. 24): the landscape, the sunshine, the soil, the plants, and the animals in the land of WA.

Bennett criticises previous notions of ‘agency’ with a more human-centered focus because there is “no agency proper to assemblages, only the effervescence of the agency of individuals acting along or in concert with each other” (Bennett, 2010, p. 29). She (2010, pp. 31-34) argues there are three elements of “efficacy, trajectory, and causality” that characterise ‘agency’. She explains that efficacy refers to “the

creativity of agency, to a capacity to make something new appear or occur” (p. 31). A trajectory is “a directionality or movement away from somewhere even if the toward-which it moves is obscure or even absent” (p. 32). The third element “causality” is the most vague. Causality is “more emergent than efficient...emergent causality places the focus on the process as itself an actant, as itself in possession of degrees of agentic capacity” (p. 33). Bennett believes that agency “is distributed across a mosaic, but it is also possible to say something about the kind of striving that may be exercised by a human within the assemblage” (Bennett, 2010, p. 38). The reason why she advocates the agency of assemblages is:

because the rubric of material agency is likely to be a stronger counter to human exceptionalism, to, that is, the human tendency to understate the degree to which people, animals, artifacts, technologies, and elemental forces share powers and operate in dissonant conjunction with each other...An assemblage owes its agentic capacity to the vitality of the materialities that constitute it. (Bennett, 2010, p. 34)

The principles in the works of Mathews and Bennett are essential to my research. My project is based on the idea that we should acknowledge the values of the natural world and its “distributive quality of agency” to emphasise “the power of human-nonhuman assemblages” (Bennett, 2010, p. 38). This is also a basic consideration from the perspective of multispecies ethnography.

3.4 Sensory ethnography and multispecies ethnography

Sensory ethnography and multispecies ethnography are the foundational parts in the conceptual and theoretical framework of the project. The tenets of sensory ethnography act as both theoretical and practical guidelines to explore daily diasporic experiences. Multispecies ethnography has thrown the light on my understanding of the interaction between human and non-human species. Although my analysis is from the human perspective, the ideas of ‘companion species’ and a material, knowable and multicultural world through the relations of agentic beings, are applied throughout the whole project.

Most earlier sensory ethnographies are rooted in social anthropology (Pink, 2009, p. 1). However, sensory ethnography is not merely a social anthropology as it integrates “ideas and practices developed across the social sciences and humanities” (Pink, 2009, p. 2) while it reaches out to “the multisensoriality of experience, perception, knowing and practice” (Pink, 2009, p. 1). For example, in Satsuka’s (2015) work, the occupation of translation is presented as a sense in the ethnographic study through which the Japanese tour guides are able to interpret Canadian nature within their traditional cultures. Satsuka comments that the guides’ translation of the Canadian Rockies, with “imaginaries of a global space, as well as temporal sensibilities of modernity,” (Satsuka, 2015, p. 2) reflects the diasporic understanding of nature, which is continuously shaped by the people’s socio-cultural concerns within their specific historical context. This ethnographic work provides a theoretical approach to understanding the relationships between diaspora, place and space through people’s daily experiential practices, perceptions and knowing.

An arising concern with senses, defined as “sensorial turn” by David Howes (2003, p. 29), is becoming fundamental to numerous contemporary academic and practical studies in geography, communications and interactions, history, arts, architecture, medicine, material culture, etc. (Pink, 2009, p. 7). Earlier geographers, such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) and Douglas Porteous (1990), showed a notable interest in sensory experiences for the understandings of space and place. Tuan argues that “an object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind” (Tuan, 1977, p. 18). However, he takes a vision-centered stance against other experiences. In contrast to the entrenched ocularcentrism of Tuan’s work, Porteous advocates rethinking “the centrality of landscape in geography through a focus on ‘non-visual sensory modes’” with the notions of “smellscape” and “soundscape” to “examine how these different modalities of sensory experience figure in the way people experience their environments” (Pink, 2009, pp. 15-16). Pink comments that this earlier attention to the senses “sought to theorise key geographical concepts in relation to the multisensoriality of human experience, focusing on space, place and landscape” (Pink, 2009, p. 16). However, she cites some recent geographic studies that have applied the approaches in ethnographies to the senses. Among the geographers Pink mentions, Lisa Law (2001) contributes an ethnographic methodology for researching sensory

landscapes. Describing the Filipina domestic workers who “produce their own sensory landscapes in public spaces of the city”, Law concludes that “they evoke ‘a sense of home’, which ‘incorporates elements of history and memory, of past and present times and spaces, helping to create a familiar place’” (Pink, 2009, p. 17). Pink proposes the appropriate way to understand sensory ethnography should be through “a theory of place and place-making, and outline [ing] the significance of memory and imagination in the ethnographic process” (Pink, 2009, p. 3). She argues that sensory ethnography should be considered as “gendered, embodied and more” (Pink, 2009, p. 10). Therefore, based on the theories of “human perception and place”, she proposes “a framework for understanding the ethnographic process and the ethnographer’s practice”(Pink, 2009, p. 10). Her view of sensory ethnography is also applicable to my case study of Western Australian Chinese, which focuses on perception, place, knowing, imagination, and especially memory through the approach of sensory ethnography.

An important theoretical sensory study addressed in this project is memory studies. Memory studies for Johnes and Garde-Hansen (2012) is “a burgeoning field of enquiry drawing upon a range of social science, arts and humanities disciplines, including geography, landscape studies, film studies, psychology and history” (Jones & Garde-Hansen, 2012, p. 3). For Seremetakis (1994), memory is “the horizon of sensory experiences, storing and restoring the experience of each sensory dimension in another, as well as dispersing and finding sensory records outside the body in a surround of entangling objects and places” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 9). From the perspective of sensory ethnography, Pink (2009, p. 37) indicates two key categories of memory: collective sensory memory and individual practices of memory. Collective memory is regarded as an important part of ethnic culture in most previous studies of diasporic communities. Clifford argues that “diasporic forms of longing, memory, and (dis) identification are shared by a broad spectrum of minority and migrant populations” (Clifford, 1994, p. 304). He indicates that in Safran’s clarification of diaspora, the inclination to “maintain a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland” is one of the main features of diaspora (Clifford, 1994, p. 305). Brah argues that “the concept of diaspora delineates a field of identifications where ‘imagined communities’ are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory” (Brah, 1996, p. 196). In the scope of

emotional geography, Jones and Garde-Hansen argue that “geography, to some extent, has (understandably) focused on collective schema (cultural, shared, public, popular, national, and so on) and how these are materialized in contesting/ed ways in places and landscapes as tension and/or competition with other collectives” (Jones & Garde-Hansen, 2012, p. 4). Ryan summarizes:

memory furthermore engages collective abilities to interpret embodied events and experiences. Hence, memory is not only the experience of a body in a place but of bodies in places; the content of memory varies with collective cultural meanings and values. (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 193)

In the context of sensory ethnography, individual memories are also worthwhile to be taken into consideration because “the role of the individual brain in being the nexus of memory, and also because, in the end, collectives of memory are woven out of the myriad narratives of individual histories which are lived from within” (Jones & Garde-Hansen, 2012, p. 2). An acknowledgement that we learn about the world we live in, understand people’s lives and represent our experiences through senses is central to practical studies in social sciences. Stoller (1997) does not agree the human body as a text principally; rather, he argues that the human body is “consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds and tastes, all of which trigger cultural memories” (Stoller, 1997, p. 85). In the research into diaspora, bodily memory highlights the relationship between diasporic individual experience and place. Casey (1987, p. 194) proposes that “moving in or through a given place, the body imports its own emplaced past into its present experience”. Ryan contends that “memory may be bodily and collective as well as emotional and topographical” while “memories always will have a spatial frame” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 194). Therefore, he agrees with Bondi (Bondi, Davidson, & Smith, 2005) that the field of “emotional geography” seeks to “understand the spatial aspects of memory and its associations with environment” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 194). Derived from related theories of environmental memory, sensory memory and emotional geography, in his construction of “botanical memory”, Ryan bridges bodily and collective memory through “the study of individual sense-based recollection of flora to the human communities living in proximity to native plants” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 188). He argues that “botanical memories reflect personal and collective proclivities, values

and dispositions towards plants and places” (2012, p. 210). His approach integrating individual and collective memories in the exploration of sense of place connects well to the paradigm of reflexivity in ethnographic fieldwork.

Along with sensory studies, the recent emergence of multispecies ethnography has taken previously marginalized creatures from “part of the landscape”, “food of humans” and “symbols” to the foreground (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010, p. 545). Multispecies ethnography concentrates on “how multitude of organisms’ livelihoods shape and are shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces” (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010, p. 545). It appears with the idea of “species turn” presented through the activity of “a *swarm*, a network with no centre to dictate order, populated by ‘a multitude of different creative agents’” (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010, p. 546). Multispecies ethnography is “a project that seeks to understand the world as materially real, partially knowable, multicultural and multinatured, magical, and emergent through the contingent relations of multiple beings and entities” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 6). In multispecies ethnographic research, the human being is conceptualised as “a register of difference that emerges through shifting, often asymmetrical, relations with other agentive beings” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 7). The idea of ‘assemblages’ provides an approach to understand “world making, or life”, through which humans, nonhuman species and things are not simply collected as an entity but the collection of “a complex and dynamic process whereupon the collective’s properties exceed their constitutive elements” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 7).

Following Donna Haraway’s (2003) concept of ‘companion species’, the reconsideration of multispecies assemblages provokes us to investigate “interspecies practices of mutuality” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 14). Involving global multispecies diaspora and diasporic practices, Anna Tsing (2012, 2013) with her colleagues explore the intimate companionship between the diasporic pickers of mushrooms in the forest of Oregon’s Mt. Hood and the Matsutake World through a global connection from America to Japan and Laos. In conversation with the natural world, multispecies ethnography is “saturated with the anticipation of knowing life outside the boundaries of human experience” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 17). These views urge me to study the plants, stones and abalone in my project with the idea of “living with”, which means “deep engagement” with particular materials and creatures (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010, p. 552).

3.5 Food studies

‘Food studies’ is not a new field in the discipline of anthropology. In 1865, the world’s first professional anthropologist, E.B. Tylor, established the anthropology of food with the argument that “cooking qualified as a human universal” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 3). Twenty years later, Colonel John Bourke launched the first paper in this field, *The Urine Dance of the Zuni Indians of New Mexico*, focusing on the edibility of certain foods and based on his own ethnographic observations (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, pp. 3-4). Dirks and Hunter comment that at this starting stage, “functionalist ideas” enabled “a deliberate, programmatic anthropology of food” to emerge (p. 4). Later, the field took a nutritional orientation during the Great Depression and the Second World War. After the war, “ecological thinking captivated general anthropology” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 4). Famous works by Harris (1966; 1977; 1985) and his collaborator Ross (1978; 1987) construct ecological explanations in the studies of “food preferences, taboos, and customary feasts” in a global context (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 4). Meanwhile, ethnographic research began to focus on “the acquisition, sharing, and redistribution of food, exposing a generation of undergraduates to narratives about food-ways in such faraway places as the Kalahari Desert (Lee, 1979) and the New Guinea Highlands (Rappaport, 1968)” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 4). However, anthropologists in these studies still regard culture as “a manifestation of shared mentalities” rather than “a reflection of practical necessities” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 4). In 1980s, more notable works, such as *Cooking, cuisine and class* (Jack Goody, 1982) and *Sweetness and power* (Sidney Mintz, 1985), “reintroduced food anthropologies to history and used it to show how both material conditions and symbolic representations changed over time” (p. 4). Following on from this, history and identity became attractive themes in food anthropology until the end of last century with more criticism of research based on “vague, singular, and static notions of identity” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 5). In 2001, David Sutton declared that “food conveys memories and in so doing engenders and maintains historical consciousness” through his examination of “the ways [in which] eating and drinking structure daily and ritual events on the Greek Island of Kalymnos” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 5).

Food-related practices and beliefs have been studied in anthropology “from nearly every conceivable angle” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 5). For Dirks and Hunter, these ways include “a commitment to holistic perspectives, dedication to comparative methods, and an abiding concern for origins and primal causes” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 5). Firstly, food anthropology’s holism applies insights to “large-scale societies,” such as minority groups, residents of urban areas, and members of local organisations, while also focusing on national and regional food systems. For instance, Richard Wilk’s work “combined ethnographic, archaeological, and historical data to show how global processes produce local culinary traditions” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 6). Secondly, comparative methods involve “long-standing engagement with present-day populations from every corner of the earth” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 6). The simplest sort of case comparisons are “used to support or debunk assertions based on the study of a single instance” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 6). The cases in the controlled comparisons are selected from “the presence or absence of some particular trait” (p. 7). The most complex comparative methodologies in anthropology are cross-cultural or “holocultural” studies, which “depend on data from a large sample of societies to subject hypotheses to statistical tests” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 7). In the third category, concerned with human origins and primal causes, “anthropological studies of food habits and dietary patterns have figured prominently in models of evolution” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 8). Anthropological studies in food have deeply influenced on my research into local ingredients and the daily recipes of Western Australian Chinese. My research aims to varied Chinese diasporic groups, in the context of evolutionary ethnic food systems, while focusing on regional communities researched through ethnographic and historical approaches.

Although of recent food studies, few concentrate on “the travels of particular food items” and turn more attention to “how food preparation and consumption creates a sense of place and cultivates specific tastes” (Dirks & Hunter, 2013, p. 8) the anthropology of food will continue to “explore a number of familiar areas” in new directions and with more analysis. In my project, the study of food is situated within the discourse of sensory ethnography. Within the discipline of sensory studies, food as a subject “provides a way to think about the shifting encounters between subjective individual experience, and the social and cultural construction of reality” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 353). Through the sensuous experiences of “tasting, smelling,

touching, seeing and even hearing food”, the individual can be a member of a society through encounter with culture (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 352). Forrest and Murphy indicate that sensory studies of food traverse both the cultural and social contexts because food is not only the subject of material experiences but also “a richly abstract field for cultural imagination” (p. 353). They also argue that as “the descriptive branch of anthropology”, ethnographic research gives “perhaps the most complete entry into sensory studies of food” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 358). In terms of diaspora, many stories involve memories of a particular meal of homeland with regional or ethnic markers, such as Japanese sushi, Chinese dumpling, Italian pizza, French macaroon, and Philadelphia cheesesteaks. On the topic of identity, Belasco asserts that “what makes these particularly poignant is that, when filtered through the lens of nostalgia, such memories become a way of preserving identities now perceived to be endangered by migration, mobility, and suburban mass culture” (Belasco, 2008, p. 27). Based on everyday experiences, in the case study of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, Lisa Law (2001) observes that “Filipino food articulates both ‘place and movement’, through its entangling of “Chinese-Filipino material and corporeal relations” and “evokes a sense of home” (p. 278). The process of sharing Filipino foods among the Filipino workers in Hong Kong engages with “elements of history and memory, of past and present times and spaces, helping to create a familiar place where memories of life in the Philippines and migration to Hong Kong might be explored from another perspective” (Law, 2001, p. 278). Combined with the framework of sensory ethnography, an anthropological study of food is an ideal conceptual approach for researching the Chinese diaspora in Western Australia.

The appreciation of Chinese foods has deep roots in Australian history and culture. Many Australians began to enjoy these exotic foods provided by local Chinese people during the last century. Eric Rolls (1992) presents a detailed description of the culinary principles of Chinese foods, connecting the bodily senses with geography, cultures and beliefs:

Chinese food has five attributes, someone explains as one sits down to a banquet; ‘colour, flavour, sound, form and smell’. That puts it among the important orders of five things: the five classes of supernatural beings, the five continents, the five oceans, the five viscera (heart, lungs, liver, kidneys,

stomach), the five flavours (sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, salt), the five senses, the five sacred mountains, the five percepts of Buddhism, the five directions, the five grains, the five elements, the five thieves (joy, anger, pleasure, grief and lust), a very long list of things both mystic and real. (Rolls, 1992, p. 421)

In Rolls' account, Chinese foods and drinks are closely related to the aesthetics of Chinese languages, Chinese traditional values, Chinese history and migration movement, and the differences between regional cultures in China. His work, combined with other scholarship in the field of Chinese studies, offer a historical resource and theoretical approach by which to study food in the context of forging individual sensory and collective memories for this project.

3.6 Livelihood and everyday practices

Nature features in the categories of diasporic cultural studies. In this project, it features as a material category focusing on everyday experience and use of nature. Giblett (2009, 2011, 2012) critiques previous cultural research approaches that exclude cultural studies of nature. Taking the perspective of ecocultural studies, and echoing Williams' (1989) point that "culture is ordinary" as "a whole way of life", Giblett (2012, p. 6) continues that "nature is constituted as the ordinary stuff of work and everyday life." In addition, developing Habermas' argument that "objective environmental nature" is constituted through "processes of social labour" (Giblett, 2011, p. 50), Giblett advocates that these processes should include domestic labor in the house, ecological work in the earth-household, and "multi-sensory engagement and enjoyment" in our own bodies (Giblett, 2011, p. 51). Giblett clarifies that the processes and the environment, in Williams' understanding, comprise the idea of "livelihood", which orientates toward both concept and practice:

Livelihood implies both one's work and one's physical surrounds, their environmental supports and effects, as well as something like the American concept of a bioregion, one's geomorphological and biological region, the watershed, the valley, the plain, the wetland, the aquifer, etc. where or on which one lives and works, and which sustains one's life, the lives of indigenes before one and still does so now in places (not to forget the resource

regions exploited elsewhere) and the life of other species of fauna as well as flora, and on which one impacts environmentally. (Giblett, 2012, p. 7)

Williams argues that the excluded third party with “a broader sense of human need and a closer sense of the physical world” (Williams, 1985, p. 266) is livelihood, which he poses “against the capitalist conquest and mastery of nature” in order to generate “a new social and natural order” (Giblett, 2012, p. 8). In diaspora studies, the idea of livelihood also offers a theoretical position from which to connect diasporic explorations and the physical world. This approach includes two directions: firstly, it forges a practical and dialectic mode of communication between diaspora and the ecological environment; secondly, it embodies abstract and subjective diasporic identities in material and objective diasporic everyday practices.

Humanistic geographers have taken a similar approach to the understanding of place: “the work[s] of Seamon, Pred, Thrift, de Certeau and others show us how place is constituted through reiterative social practice – place is made and remade on a daily basis” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 39). In *The practice of everyday life*, de Certeau (1998, p. 117) argues that “space is a practiced place”, existing in the everyday practices of ordinary people, such as language use and walking. Spatial practices evolve as effects of diasporic movements. Livelihood and everyday practices are conceptual pivot points in the theoretical framework of my research into diasporic Western Australian Chinese communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the tenets of the methodology of ethnography and the specific methods adopted in this project. As a cross-cultural study of the relationship between diaspora and the natural world, the appropriate methodology for this project is ethnography. In this project, multispecies ethnography has profoundly influenced my understanding of material nature as mutual assemblages. In practice, the use of ethnography, especially sensory ethnography, integrates qualitative research approaches through the understanding of discipline-specific scholarship and applied studies.

The methods of ethnographic practices include ethnographic interviews and the classic participant observation in data collection. In data analysis, a sensory approach is outlined via both the participants' and my own engagements with the Western Australian environment. The following section in this chapter is an overview of the ecological environment in Perth in order to develop a better understanding of the field in which I conducted this ethnographic research. The last section in this chapter is a brief introduction to the illustrative film based on the video documentation of my interviews with the participants in the case study of recreational abalone harvesting.

4.2 Methodology

Ethnography is regarded as both a methodology (a theoretical and philosophical framework) and a method (data collection technique) (Brewer, 2000, p. 54). Brewer (2000, p. 10) articulates two ways of defining ethnography referred as “big” and “little” ethnography. “The former equates it with qualitative research as a

whole; the latter restricts its meaning to ‘field research’” (Brewer, 2000, p. 10).

Brewer defines “little” ethnography as

the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally. (Brewer, 2000, p. 10)

In addition, Brewer (2000) argues that ethnography “cannot be broken into a series of hermetic stages but should properly be seen as a process” (p. 56). Barker (2003, p. 25) avers that “ethnographic cultural studies has been centred on the qualitative exploration of values and meanings in the context of a ‘whole way of life’”. Pink states that “ethnography is a reflexive and experiential process through which understanding, knowing and (academic) knowledge are produced” (Pink, 2009, p. 8). She defines ethnography as “a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers’ own experiences” (Pink, 2009, p. 8). In Pink’s definition, ethnography does not require the ethnographers to reproduce reality, but to represent experiences of their reality “that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced” (Pink, 2009, p. 8).

These views on ethnography, which emphasise the elements of experience, engagement and reflection, are essential to this project. Based on this, the approach of sensory ethnography, which emphasises the consideration of practices and the material cultures of the participants in ethnographic experiences, is adopted as the main methodology in this project. In a practical sense, Karen O’Reilly suggests some principles in her definition of ethnography as:

iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory as well as the researcher’s own role and that views humans as part object/part subject. (O’Reilly, 2005, p. 3)

Similarly, Sara Delamont develops that ethnographic research should be conducted by “living with the people being studied, watching them work and play, thinking carefully about what is seen, interpreting it and talking to the actors to check the emerging interpretations” (Delamont, 2004, p. 206). Based on the important principles by O’Reilly and the classic approach by Delamont, Pink (2009) indicates that sensory ethnography is “a developing field of practice” (p. 10). In her view, there are two key approaches in sensory ethnography. One is the study of “other people’s systems of sensory categorization and classification”, and the relative meanings developed as “part of the earlier anthropology of the senses” (Pink, 2009, p. 46). Another one is the ethnographic consideration of “the senses from the starting point of the self-reflexive and experiencing body, thus regarding the sensorial in ethnography as embedded in the approach of the embodied ethnographer” (Pink, 2009, p. 46). She promotes the second approach as “a means of apprehending and comprehending other people’s experiences, ways of knowing and sensory categories, meanings and practices” (Pink, 2009, p. 46). As an insider ethnographer in this project, I also need to interpret my own experiences in relation to sensuous practices in field research of my own cultures, as Pink concludes, the practice of sensory ethnography encompasses researcher’s consideration of both established and new “sensory perception, categories, meanings and values, ways of knowing and practices” (Pink, 2009, p. 10). This practice approach involves the ethnographers’ self-conscious and reflexive participation and observation through senses during the whole research process.

The application of digital visual and audio technologies is a suitable approach in ethnographic research. Pink argues that in “a collaborative process of exploring specific themes and topics with an interviewee”, the use of these technologies complements “the ethnographer’s physical engagements with the materiality and sensoriality of everyday and other contexts” (Pink, 2009, p. 10). She also explains other “less conventional methods [that] may entail more intentional interventions on the part of the researcher”, such as “producing a film, writing a song or inventing a new recipe with one’s research participants, or inviting them to reflexively engage in an everyday or designed activity” (Pink, 2009, p. 10). Pink expounds upon the methods I will use in my ethnographic research while providing a methodological

foundation for my documentary film on abalone harvesting in Western Australia, as discussed in the last section of this chapter.

4.3 Data collection

Barker indicates that qualitative methods including participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups are the ‘spirit’ of ethnography (Barker, 2003, p. 26). In most ethnographic works, the characteristic form as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest:

involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 1)

This form parallels the principles proposed by O’Reilly in ethnographic studies via the senses. Regina Bendix suggests that “sensory perception and reception” in research require that the applied approaches can encompass “the most profound type of knowledge [which] is not spoken of at all and thus inaccessible to ethnographic observation or interview” (Bendix, 2000, p. 4). According to Pink (2009, p. 49), there are two criteria for choosing an appropriate research method: the method should enable the researcher to explore the answers to research questions; and the method must “simultaneously be suitable for and amenable to the research participants in question” (Pink, 2009, p. 49). In line with the considerations, in my project, firstly, I adopt the conventional ethnographic research methods of interviews and participant observation. Secondly, besides the participating Chinese people, I also consider the natural world and nonhuman beings as research participants. Finally, as a supplementary method of data collection, video documentation provided an intuitive approach for the reinforcement of my argument.

4.3.1 Interviews

The interview, including the in-depth interview and focus-group interview, is one of the key methods in my data collection. It has enabled me to conduct a qualitative investigation into the way of local diasporic living and a comprehensive understanding of the meanings and values of the dynamic relations between human beings and their ecologies.

Burgess asserts that “there is a long tradition in social science research where interviews have been perceived as conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984, p. 102). He indicates that interviews as conversations have greater value than “straight question and answer sessions” because they can provide richer and more detailed data (Burgess, 1984, p. 102). However, Gray (2003, p. 95) concedes that the open interview cannot be regarded only as a chat. It aims to establish of “a good rapport with the respondent,” thus, it is better to describe this method as “a structured conversation”. Gray emphasises that during interviewing, “the interviewer must be an active listener,” while it is important to be able to think “on your feet” (2003, p. 95). Brewer (2000, p. 63) asserts that in ethnography, interviewing is based on two critical assumptions “namely that “respondents’ verbal descriptions are a reliable indicator of their behaviour, meanings, attitudes and feelings, and that the stimuli [the questions] are a reliable indicator of the subject of the research”. He suggests that ethnographers tend towards the use of unstructured or in-depth interviews. Their central feature is “to engage in as informal a face-to-face encounter as possible so that it appears almost like a natural conversation between people with an established relationship” (Brewer, 2000, p. 67).

In Pink’s (2009, p. 81) view, the method of an interview in sensory ethnography functions on two levels. First, she regards it as “a multisensory event and, as such, a context of emplaced knowing” (Pink, 2009, p. 81). Secondly, “it is a process through which we might learn (in multiple ways) about how research participants represent and categorise their experiences, values, moralities, other people and things (and more) by attending to *their* treatments of the senses” (Pink, 2009, p. 81). She concludes that as a qualitative research method, the interview has two aspects: it is both “a social event” and “a form of conversation” (Pink, 2009, p.

82). It is both “emplaced and productive of place” with “material and sensorial components” (Pink, 2009, p. 82). In similar terms, Barbara Sherman Heyl defines ethnographic interviewing as that:

in which researchers have established respectful, ongoing relationships with their interviewees, including enough rapport for these to be a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews for the interviewees to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their worlds. (Heyl, 2001, p. 367)

Pink argues that the ethnographic interview is a “social, sensorial and emotive” process “where multisensorial experience is verbalised through culturally constructed sensory categories and in the context of the intersubjective interaction between ethnographer and research participant” (Pink, 2009, p. 85). She also states that ethnographic interviewing may employ “a mixed method approach” such as soundwalk and video-tour method (Pink, 2009, p. 84). In addition, an interview is reducible to an “aural encounter or event” but also comprises “the materiality of the environment and of artefacts” (Pink, 2009, p. 85). Related to the idea of place, Evans and Jones (2011, p. 857) note that “walking interviews have been demonstrated as a highly productive way of accessing a local community’s connections to their surrounding environment”. All these approaches to the interview discussed above have influenced my research.

I conducted the interviews with Chinese diasporic groups, Chinese families and some individuals in Perth who had migrated from the Chinese mainland in this century (Table 2). To acquire varied research cases, I recruited eight individual, local Chinese participants and four local Chinese families with thirteen persons for in-depth interviews. All the interviewees were Mandarin-speaking Chinese. Gray (2003, p. 104) suggests using the method of group discussion at an early stage in a project as it is an extremely valuable approach to generating ideas and concepts used in further interviews. Therefore, in accordance with three main study cases (local wine industry, abalone recreational harvesting, and vegetable gardening), three groups were interviewed: wine industry employees, abalone harvesting enthusiasts and amateur vegetable gardeners. The majority of the interviewees in the fishing group were from Chinese coastal provinces such as Shandong, which was the first aquaculture site for

abalone in China in the 1980s. All the participants in the in-depth and focus group interviews were adults aged between twenty and fifty. In the interviews with the families, some participants were teenagers. Background information about the participants is included in Appendix 1.

The methods used to recruit the participants included personal contacts (information obtained from my friends or local Chinese social networks), telephone contacts, referrals to new people by the participants (snowballing), and recruitment by a third party (through participants' social networks and the wine trading company). Compared to some other recruiting methods (e.g. advertisements or posters), these methods were effective in this project because they were suitable to the conventional and traditionally clannish Chinese personality, making friends within small groups according to regional or cultural background. The criteria for recruitment of the participants were determined according to both regional and personal perspectives. For example, I chose some fishing enthusiasts from Shandong provinces for the focus group interview in the abalone case because Shandong is a coastal province in North China where the first Chinese abalone farm was founded in the 1980s. Through conversations with the participants, I obtained more information about Chinese views on abalone, and comparisons between their homeland and the hostland.

To ensure the research was as far as possible collaborative, it was important to adopt pragmatic approaches to “prevent our research causing any harm or disrespect to others” (Pink, 2009, p. 58). All the participants were provided sufficient information and adequate understanding of this project in the form of the information letter (Appendix 2) and the consent forms (Appendix 3), returned to me after they were read and signed. I also prepared an auxiliary consent form for teenagers and their guardians (Appendix 4). In my ethics consideration, there are two specific issues: the teenage participants (11-16 years old), video-audio recording of the participants. The teenagers were interviewed with their families.

Although all the interviews were conducted in Mandarin, the participants had no difficulty in reading or understanding English. After interviewing, I provided both the original interview notes in Chinese and the English transcripts, which were translated by myself, to the participants for a content check. Pink emphasises that a sensory approach is situated in a moral perspective, “which respects research participants and recognises that ethnography might have a role in the real world as

well as in academia” (Pink, 2009, p. 59). According to their personal requirements, some participants chose to remain anonymous or use English names in the project. However, most key participants (Duan Xin and Yang Chunlong in the abalone case, the couple Yang Linlin and Zhao Ying in the cases of spatial practices and the wine industry, and Hu Xueyou in the vegetable gardening case) gave written consent for their real names to be used in this project.

Table 2: Interview Participants

Individual	Group	Family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>abalone</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhao Wei (University student) • Duan Xin (businessman) • Yang Chunlong (masterchef) • <i>vegetable gardening</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hu xueyou (welder) • Chen Fen (factory worker) • <i>wine industry</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lin (businessman) • <i>Natural resources</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Wang (businessman) • Richard Li (university student) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>abalone harvesting</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duan Xin • Lu Fang (restaurant owner) • Billy Han (assessment consultant) • Tommy Zhan (engineer) • Sun Fengyong (engineer) • <i>vegetable gardening</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hu Xueyou • Chen Fen • Sun Lanhua (welder) • <i>wine industry</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yang Linlin (sales manager) • Max Sun (sales manager) • Tony Huang (sales manager) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>spatial practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Duan's family</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duan Xin (husband) • Li Hong (wife) • <i>Yang's family</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yang Linlin (wife) • Zhao Ying (husband) • Jane Zhao (daughter, 16 years old) • Kate Zhao (daughter, 14) • Nicole Zhao (daughter, 11) • <i>Nature and FengShui</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wang's family</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Wang (husband) • Ada Wang (wife) • Helen Wang (daughter, 15) • <i>Yang's family</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yang Chunlong (husband) • Li Lijun (wife) • Yang Fan (daughter)

Each interview was conducted within one hour. These interviews focused on semi-structured conversation in “a shared place” (Pink, 2009, p. 82). Some key participants (Yan Linlin, Duan Xin and Hu Xueyou) were interviewed twice or more as they took part in both in-depth and focus-group interviews. My interviews were based on the daily lives of the participants. The questions related to how they developed their careers or interests during the process of geographical relocation and how they had adapted to a new environment while maintaining their Chinese culture. Moreover, for “a whole range of different embodied experiences and emotions into the narratives” (Pink, 2009, p. 86), I constantly combined participation with interviewing, such as walking interview in Hu’s backyard garden and harvesting abalone with the Shandong participants while interviewing them. After the interviews,

I maintained relationships with all the participants and continue to share mutual experiences of the diasporic lives. These practices enabled me to understand the ways of living of the participants as well as to reflexively learn about the place we live in. As Pink (2009, p. 58) states, rather than studying the sensory values in other people's life, the idea of sensory ethnography is to 'collaborate' with the research participants to explore and identify the knowing.

4.3.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is another important research method in my project. The aim of participant observation in this research was to explore both practical and theoretical truths about local Chinese interactions with Perth's environment grounded in diasporic livelihood. Brewer (2000, p. 59) argues that participant observation is "perhaps the data collection technique most closely associated with ethnography." Bogdewic analyses seven features of the research method of participant observation:

the insiders' viewpoint, the here and now of everyday life, the development of interpretive theories, an open-ended process of inquiry, an in-depth case study approach, the researcher's direct involvement in informants' lives, and direct observation as a primary data-gathering device. (Bogdewic, 1992, p. 46)

In the scope of sensory ethnography, Pink insists that the practices of participation and observation might be understood as "multisensorial and emplaced" learning methods and "ethnographic knowledge production is an essentially reflexive process" (Pink, 2009, p. 63). In the existing literature, there are two main views of this method. One is represented in Howes and Classen's (1991, p. 259) work: they argue that participant observation should take place on both the particular and the general levels. Pink comments that the classical approaches in the literature are focused on "understanding cultural and social values, organisation and more" while limited to "a stress on visual observation." She argues that "taking a phenomenological approach, we can understand experience as multisensorial and as such *neither* dominated by *nor* reducible to a visual mode of understanding" (Pink, 2009, p. 64). The latter view she relates to "auto-ethnography", "a method that allows ethnographers to use their own

experiences as a route through which to produce academic knowledge” (Pink, 2009, p. 64). Pink (2009, p. 64) remarks that, at the time of research, the ethnographer becomes “a constituent of place (one of those things brought together, or entangled in, a place-event), and an agent in its production”.

In my research, during participant observation from 2014 to 2016, these approaches, especially “auto-ethnography”, influenced the outcomes of the ethnographic process. To explore the daily experiences of diasporic Chinese in Western Australia, I participated in recreational abalone harvesting, Chinese vegetable gardening, local wine tasting, indoor and outdoor recreational activities, Chinese parties, and Chinese New Year celebrations (Table 3).

Table 3: Participant Observation Activities (2014 – 2016)

Activities	Location Description	Date(s)
<i>Recreational abalone harvesting</i>	Marmion Marine Park	2014 – 2016: five annual abalone fishing days which occurs from 7:00 am to 8:00 am on first Sunday of each month starting from November
<i>Abalone cooking and tasting</i>	Duan Xin’s home	22/11/2014
	Yang Chunlong’s restaurant	20/04/2015
<i>Crab fishing</i>	Como	with Duan Xin (14/04/2015)
	Mandurah	with Yang Chunlong (16/05/2015, 25/12/2015)
<i>Local wine tasting</i>	local Chinese trading company	18/12/2015, 02/12/2016
<i>Backyard visits</i>	Hu Xueyou’s home	14/03/2015, 17/05/2015, 23/12/2015
<i>Chinese New Year Celebration</i>	Burswood Northbridge	19/02/2015 09/02/2016
<i>Chinese Parties</i>	picnic in Charles Paterson Park with Shandong Association	22/11/2014
<i>Recreational activities</i>	King’s Park Wild Flower Festival	01/09/2014, 30/09/2015
	Araluen Botanic Park	28/10/2015
	Jacaranda Festival in Applecross	14/11/2015

These activities were not only the fields in which I “[sought] out ways to share others’ experiences” (Pink, 2009, p. 64), but also sites where I could form my own emplaced experiences. The activities, for me, as Pink indicates, helped me to recognise my “own emplacement in other people’s worlds” (Pink, 2009, p. 64). As a way of ‘being there’, the fieldwork provided me the same environment as my participants. It enabled me to experience “the sensory rhythms and material practices of that environment” (Pink, 2009, p. 66). As an insider ethnographer, I have lived in Perth, WA over eight years. For me, Perth is both there and here, evoking both a sense of becoming and of belonging. This was an advantage for my study as I shared the same living experiences and diasporic practices with my fellow members. Although I was not learning about another culture when I engaged in the activities, my role in the participant observation was still as “sensory apprentice”, which is “a way of knowing” through “actually engaging in the activities and environments we wish to learn about that we come to know them” (Pink, 2009, p. 70). However, this role was also a limitation to my understanding and interpretation of the participants’ worlds. I discuss this point in the final chapter as a part of limitations of this project.

One specific focus of my participation in this project was on walking, as life itself is “as much a long walk as it is a long conversation, and the ways along which we walk are those along which we live” (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, p. 1). In Ingold and Vergunst’s understanding, a way of walking is “a way of thinking and of feeling” (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, p. 2). For J. C. Ryan, walking “puts us in touch with place and disrupts the hierarchies of vision” (J. C. Ryan, 2011, p. 47). Pink also argues that walking is “a near-universal multisensorial activity” and “a form of place-making” (Pink, 2009, p. 76). Walking with the participants in parks, along the riverside, or on the streets created “an affinity, empathy or sense of belonging with them” by “sharing their step, style and rhythm” (Pink, 2009, p. 73). With “a commitment to self-reflexivity” (Pink, 2009, p. 77), J.C. Ryan conceptualises walking as “a dynamic interconnection between being and becoming” (J. C. Ryan, 2011, p. 47). In his view, gestural walking involves bodily experience through all senses (J. C. Ryan, 2011, p. 46).

Another focus in my participant observation was the experience of sharing foods with the participants, exploring the meanings of ingredients, sights, smells, tastes, textures and cooking methods. Food study in my project not only included the

bodily sensory studies, it was also associated with a diasporic sense of belong and becoming. For Head and Muir, food production is related to “reproduction of tradition and practice in the migrant experience” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 89). Culinary factors that construct the cultural aspects of an identity include “taste, family and ethnic background, personal memories (the association between particular foods and past events, both good and bad)” (Belasco, 2008, p. 6). In ethnographic studies, eating is regarded as “a way of knowing and remembering” (Pink, 2009, p. 73). Eating with participants at home or during special events such as parties allowed me to experience different food practices and specific tastes. I benefited from this sharing to produce knowing via sensory sociality.

4.4 Data analysis

During and after data collection, corresponding to the research questions, which investigate the dynamic relationship between Chinese people and local material world, I sorted the data from the interviews and my participant observations into subthemes shown in Chapters 5 to 9 (nature as space, Feng Shui practice, natural products, abalone harvesting, and Chinese gardening).

There are two facets to note about data analysis. The first one is that analysis is a continuous process with three sub-processes: “data reduction (selecting units of the data from the total universe of data); data display (assembling the information in some format); and conclusion drawing (interpretation of the findings)” (Brewer, 2000, p. 107). Another consideration is that there is a slight difference between analytical processes in various types of ethnography. Despite the variations of analysis in different types of ethnography, there is a common emphasis on inductive reasoning and a reciprocal relation between theory and practice.

There is no standard template for a sensory ethnographic analysis. Pink comments that the analysis is “a process of abstraction, which serves to connect the phenomenology of experienced reality into academic debate or policy recommendations” (Pink, 2009, p. 120). She suggests that ethnographers undertake sensory analysis in two ways. Firstly, a research may “go native”. This means that the

researchers become “totally immersed in the sensorial and emotional ways of being and knowing lived by the people participating” without any analysis from his or her experiences” (Pink, 2009, p. 121). Secondly, the researcher may maintain a focus on the relations between data. When the analysis deviates from the phenomenological context, the ethnographer should deliberately track a way to “maintain (or conduct) connections between the materials and the ways of knowing associated with their production” (Pink, 2009, p. 121). Rather than a simple stage in the research schedule, analysis in sensory ethnography is “a continuous and incremental process” which “moves between different registers of engagement with a variety of research materials” (Pink, 2009, p. 128).

In this project, guided by the subthemes, my analysis started from the idea that the natural world of WA, Perth region, is a multisensory environment where I could interpret and connect with Chinese diasporic experiences and the transformation of traditional Chinese cultures. This idea draws on my first research question, which interrogates Chinese people’s perceptions of natural surroundings. Through totally immersing myself into modes of local diasporic living, I continued to track the transformation of the people’s self-perception via engagement with the local physical world, which relates to the second research question. Around the last research question, analysis of data is associated with the view that the environment itself has agency to impact upon the diasporic people and conversely, people impact upon the environment (especially in Chapter nine, gardening example).

On the basis of sensory ethnographic theories, the analysis process concentrates on how the sensescape of the diasporic place is remembered, imagined, and transformed through materiality, sociality and sensoriality (Pink, 2009, p. 128). Data analysis employs two types of description. The first one is the description of the broad scope of the research background, including the research field of WA’s surrounding environment and the Chinese diasporic group. It aims to provide sufficient information for the subsequent analysis. In this way, the data is presented in the form of ‘thick description’, historical contexts and the application of theoretical principles from the environmental humanities. The second description is based on the data collected from the participant observations and the interviews. These materials are summarised, synthesized and extracted to produce condensed theoretical insights gained through reading, interpreting and refining. The purpose of this analytic stage

was to connect the phenomenological contexts to the ethnographic ways of knowing and producing.

During the process, I also employed the key theories and concepts in the relative disciplines to address the analysis. In data analysis, all the participants were identified in the participant list with a specific code (Appendix 1), which helped to differentiate groups of participants. The code starting with capital 'N' signifies that a participant was an interviewee in the chapter on "nature as a space" (Chapter 5). The capital 'A' represents an interviewee in the chapter on abalone harvesting (Chapter 8) and a capital 'W' indicates an interviewee in the case study of wine (Chapter 7). The case study of Chinese gardening (Chapter 9) is marked with letter 'G'. The following number refers to the order of interview. For instance, the code 'A1' for the participant Duan Xin means the first interviewee in the case study of abalone.

In this ethnographic study, data collection and data analysis were conducted throughout the whole process of my fieldwork. Along with the interviews, I engaged in the activities of abalone fishing, vegetable gardening, wine tasting and other activities with the key participants. During these activities, I took part in fishing, eating, drinking, planting, sporting, as well as photographing and collecting various research materials comprised of written notes, audio-recorded and transcribed interviews, photographs and video footage with some interviews, which were included in the illustrated film. All the interview transcripts, my observation notes and participative records served to answer the research questions, clarifying the implicit and explicit relations between local Chinese people and the natural world.

4.5 Overview of the ecological environment in Perth

Perth is the capital city of the state of Western Australia (WA). Western Australia covers almost one third of the area of Australia with an estimated population of over two million living in greater Perth, which includes the Perth metropolitan region, the city of Mandurah, and part of the shire of Murray (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, State summary) WA includes several climatic zones, "ranging from the north Kimberley, where heavy rains are experienced in the summer 'wet' season,

through the mostly dry interior with its excessive summer heat, to the southwest with its distinctively Mediterranean climate” (Bureau of Meteorology, 2009, para.1). The fourth-most populous city in Australia, Perth is part of the South West land division of Australia, located on the Swan Coastal Plain (Figure 2). In Dixon’s Dixon (2011, p. 5) description, the Swan Coastal Plain is “an extensive depositional, mostly sandy plain extending from Eneabba to Dunsborough.” The topography and local geomorphology of the Plain were formed under the influences of sea-level change. “The Quindalup Dune geological system gives rise to the distinctive mounded coastal dune vegetation comprising low heath and swale thickets interspersed with patches of white sand” (Dixon, 2011, p. 6).



Figure 2. Location of Perth on the Swan Coastal Plain (the yellow area) (The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC), 2016)

This area is one of the most isolated places in the world as the nearest city with a population of over 100,000 is Adelaide, over 2000 kilometers away. In Seddon's work, the south-west of Western Australia is described as "an island, with sea to the south and west, desert to the north and east, and one cannot leave it north or east without crossing mile after mile of desert" (Seddon, 1972, p. xiv). It has a typically Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Ryan notes that "[r]emarkable varied and venerable plants have evolved through this rare combination of stable climate, geographical isolation and lateritic soils" (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 42). This land is "a biodiversity hotspot of international significance and one of the most floristically diverse regions in the world" (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 41). Of the over 8000 indigenous plants in this area, half of them are flowering. Its predominant vegetation is Banksia woodland and Kwongan heath in the lowlands and Marri/Jarrah forest in the hills (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 41).

Compared with biodiversity elsewhere in the Southwest hotspots, botanical species are relatively fewer along the coastal areas of Perth. "Limestone outcrops along the coast and including coastal rock islands have a general lack of endemic, autochthonous vegetation" (Dixon, 2011, p. 54). However, WA's coastline is another hotspot with a unique aquatic biodiversity. According to a document from the Fisheries WA, the West Coast bioregion extends "north of Kalbarri to Black Point, east of Augusta, and contains more than 100 species of fish targeted by recreational fishers" (Fisheries Western Australia, 2011, para.1)(Figure 3). The marine environment of the region is heavily influenced by "the Leeuwin Current, which transports warm tropical water southward along the edge of the continental shelf". It impacts "on the growth and distribution of the temperate seagrasses...[which] act as major nursery areas for many fish species and particularly for the western rock lobster stock...which is Australia's most valuable single-species wild capture fishery" (Fletcher, 2015, p. 22). The area with the state's major population of people is also a significant place for recreational fishing of invertebrates, including "scallops, abalone, blue swimmer crabs and octopus" (Fletcher, 2015, p. 22).

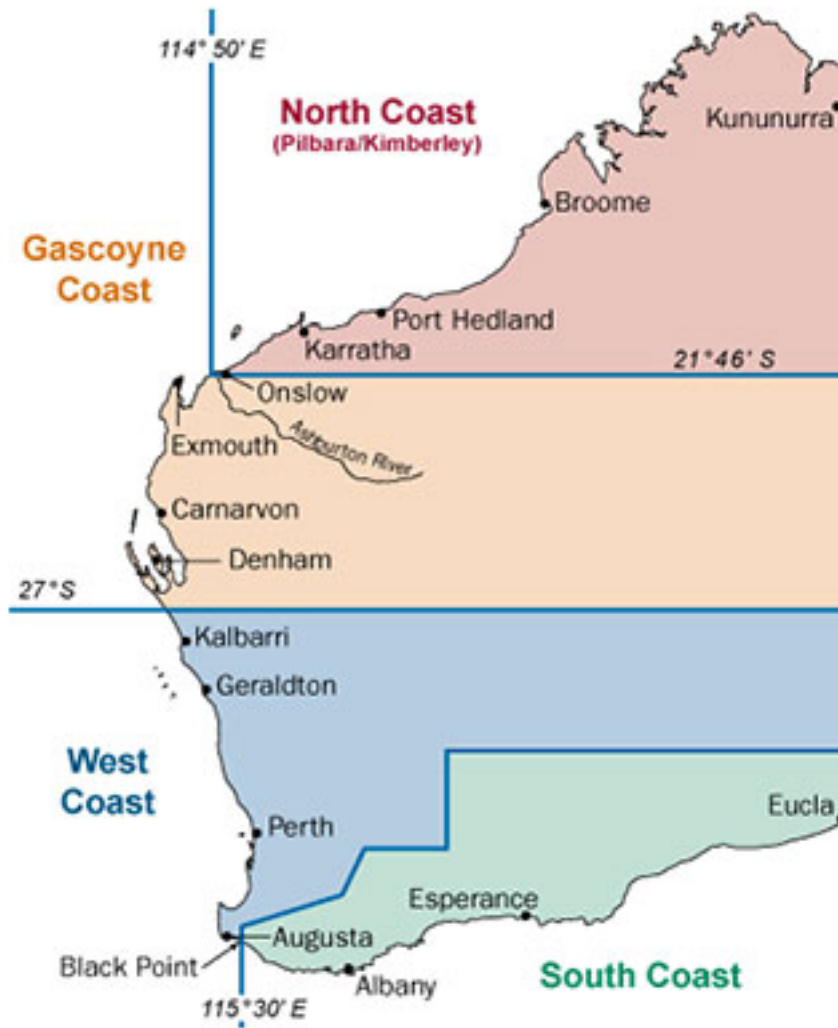


Figure 3. West Coast Bioregion (Fisheries Western Australia, 2011)

This review of Perth's ecological environment is important for this study of relationships between diasporic Chinese people and Perth. I chose Perth as my research field for the following three reasons. Firstly, compared with the big cities in the eastern part of Australia, such as Sydney and Melbourne, Perth is distinguished by its typical Mediterranean climate, geographical isolation and unique natural resources. Its ecological environment is extremely different from that in most parts of China. Secondly, although the number of Chinese residents in Perth is comparatively small, the Chinese diaspora began arriving in the settlement nearly two hundred years ago, even earlier than the "Gold Rush." Perth is not a new habitation for Chinese. Thirdly, to most Chinese people who are going to live in Australia, Perth is not their first

choice for resettlement because of their perception of its intense sunshine, monotonous wild landscapes, and remoteness from big cities. However, for the Chinese residents who have lived here for a long time, such as me, Perth is regarded as a cozy home allowing for walks along the Swan River, picnics in parks, surfing and fishing at the beach, and gardening in backyards. Seddon argues that “much of the interest of the landscape around Perth comes from very small things rather than from ‘scenery’ as conventionally understood, and this change in the scale of attention is also one of the moves of science” (Seddon, 1972, p. xiv). His focus on “very small things” is also one of the methodological guidelines of my project.

4.6 Illustrative film based on ethnographic research

Grounded in video documentation, and my previous work experiences in documentary filmmaking, I made a film serving to illustrate my arguments through the participants’ and my own reflections from an auto-ethnographic perspective. This is not a professional production or a separate creative work for assessment but an appropriate method to illustrate the people’s physical and reflexive engagement in everyday lives, which was addressed in my ethnographic research. The film can be considered to take the place of photographs in the thesis. It provides a richer visual illustration of the findings of my ethnographic approach to data collection and sits alongside the textual account. During the research procedures, video and audio recording were part of my observation and the interviews. All the participants agreed to audio recording during the interviews and participants involved in my video recording consented to being filmed (Appendix 3).

The film footage is comprised of video recording of some interviews, where consent was given, and many of my participant observations. During the last three years, I have worked with the cameraman to film the participants in abalone harvesting (Duan Xin and other harvesters from Shandong Association) and in preparing both homemade (Duan Xin) and professional (master chef Yang Chunlong) abalone dishes. I also have considerable footage of local festivals engaged with the natural environment (Kings Park Wild Flower Festival in 2014 and 2015, Applecross Jacaranda Festival in 2015, and Araluen Botanic Park in 2015) and Chinese cultural

events (Chinese New Year Festival in 2015 and 2016). There are nearly 1000 minutes of footage, of which half covers local abalone recreational harvesting.

The title of the film is *Baoyu* (abalone) as the film is grounded in the case study of abalone harvesting. In this film, *Baoyu* is both a symbol of Chinese culture and an agentic material in the local natural world. The film encapsulates the interactions between the diaspora and the ecology mediated by my self-reflective position as an insider ethnographer. The logline for the film is shown in Appendix 5 and the Draft Script in Appendix 6.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATURE AS SPACE

5.1 Introduction

As my project concentrates on the relationships between place, space and the Chinese people in Perth, diasporic spatial practice in the daily life is the first topic for the discussion. This chapter stresses the notion that “nature is ordinary” (Giblett, 2012) as a space of daily life. Around this theme, this chapter is organised into three sections. The first section considers different senses of space in homelands and hostlands. Chinese sense of space and current problems in the Chinese ecological environment are addressed as a background context. Thus the different senses of space in different places gather as a cluster of memories that contribute to constructing a continuous and dynamic diasporic space.

The second section focuses on current diasporic spatial practices, both personal and collective, in Perth. It starts with first impressions of Perth, drawing on my auto-ethnographic reflection and the experiences of two participants, Yang (N6) and Li (N12). It outlines a common sense of the new place for most urban Chinese immigrants and illustrates the converted sense of place and space. The following discussion is located in relation to the participant Richard Wang’s daily walking to explain how nature acts as a space for bodily engagement in everyday. The last discussion in this section includes two cases of collective outdoor spatial practices. Interviews with the couple Duan and Li illustrate how dispersed individuals evoke a sense of equal belonging and a sense of place in collective networks through daily spatial practices.

The third section describes how conceptions of nature are embodied for the participants as a sense of everyday space through their domestic and suburban practices. Spatial practices in the natural world, such as walking, activities in parks and other engagement with outdoor living, allow a greater sense of space for diasporic people who have lived in bigger cities in China with crowded populations. Although some Chinese residents in Perth do not realise that their lives are closely connected with the natural world, in fact, nature works provide a space on a daily basis, even if

the people do not go outside frequently. Domestic and suburban places are lived spaces produced by ordinary people through their routines of housing, property decorating, gardening, exercising or working.

5.2 Background

The sense of space is closely related to specific living places, especially for the diasporic Chinese who have migrated from Chinese cities to Perth. Although in the past ten years Perth has become the second fastest growing capital city in Australia, its population of 2.02 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, Summary section) is far smaller than that of most Chinese cities. For ordinary Chinese people, the sense of living space varies according to amendments in economic and political policies. Fang explains that Chinese urban residential space was “shaped by the segmentation of different ‘Danwei’ ([work] unit, ‘单位’) in the period of planned economy, but after housing reforming it becomes [*sic*] to be shaped by individual socioeconomic status” (Changchun Fang, 2014, p. 109).

According to Fang (2014, pp. 101-102), before the 1990s, the homogenisation of personal residential living space was the main feature of housing provision in Chinese cities. During a long period (1950s–1990s) of economic planning by the Chinese government, the housing provision system came to be based on a socialist welfare model and work unit ownership to meet the demands of industrial development and increased social stability. In practice, when the government planned residential housing, it usually located the dwelling area within or adjacent to the working place. In addition, the housing facilities and community management were strictly designed in accordance with work units. This kind of residential space indeed depended on working spaces. From my personal experience, I remember in the 1970s how my family lived in the staff dwelling community in a public hospital because both my parents were doctors in the hospital. All of the thousands of apartments were similarly furnished and had the same design and structure, only about one hundred metres from the clinic buildings. The allocation of housing depended on staff’s work experience and education level. This style of housing is easily found in movies with set in this period such as *In the heat of the sun* (Guo, Hsu, Po, & Jiang, 1994) and

Peacock (Gu, Dong, Er, & Gu, 2005). However, urban housing shortages and inequalities, contrary to expectations of equalization within the country, persisted in China. Lee (1988) indicates that “in 1952 the national average per capita floor space was 4.5 square metres” and the figure kept declining until the 1980s (p. 388). In 1981, the data shows that “Canton was the most crowded city in China, with a per capita floor space of only 2.0 square metres” (Lee, 1988, p. 388). In terms of inequality, Lee demonstrates that in the early 1950s with the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, “landlords and wealthy people lost their previous income sources and had to rent out parts of the houses they used to occupy” (Lee, 1988, p. 397). During the process of equalization, “urban dwellers who work[ed] for the city or collectively-owned enterprises receive[d] substantially less (or even no) housing support from the state government unlike their counterparts who work[ed] in state-owned enterprises” (Lee, 1988, p. 398). The inequality in residential space reflected “the inequalities [of social status] that already exist among various groups of China’s urban population” (Lee, 1988, p. 398).

With the development of Chinese urbanization, following a ten-year housing reform in the 1980s, new policies were promulgated in order to solve the housing shortage and overcrowding problems and improve inefficient use of land by commercialization. However, these new guidelines still could not match the demand for housing of a rapidly increasing urban population, especially in large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Additionally, Lee argues, “the recent housing construction boom actually accentuated existing inequalities” (Lee, 1988, p. 404). One reason is that with the drastic increase in house prices in large cities, housing policies gradually inclined to support middle and high-income families through various financial arrangements. The residential spaces for these groups were spacious houses or apartments located in central areas of cities while the low-income groups could only afford small flats in marginal suburbs. A large percentage of migrant rural workers even lived in the high-density informal housing of simple sheds in ‘urban villages’ (dwelling areas for low-income residents). The differences in socio-economic status changed the previous structure of urban residential space, which was distributed according to industrial classification. Fang remarks that in contemporary Chinese cities, “residential space differentiation and the trend of residential segregation” were caused by both political reformation and economic transition

(Changchun Fang, 2014, p. 109). In other words, experiences of residential and urban spaces differ according to the individual's resources. Thus, the sense of living space is identified by socio-economic status.

Moreover, new environmental problems appear with urban sprawl, as is happening in most developing countries and cities (Chuanglin Fang & Wang, 2013, p. 147). The notable problems are smog, shortage of land, polluted air, soil and water, and loss of green spaces. In industrialised cities, inhabitants can only feel the natural world in the gardens of commercial dwelling communities and large parks in cities. However, while most community gardens are available to residents, there is usually a high cost involved to seek recreation in parks or zoos. Although in recent years the concerns of city planning have turned to green spaces for inhabitants, to experience the natural world more fully, people still need to go far beyond cities' boundaries. Hence, it is not difficult to understand the phenomenon of tourists crowding every natural scenic spot in China on public holidays. For most urban Chinese, exposure to nature occurs through domestic practices, such as balcony planting, a simple way to appreciate the environment. Nowadays, the percentage of green land has become an important criterion for allocating housing. Rich people can enjoy more living space with lower residential density. For these reasons, an intimate relationship with the natural world achieved in the hostland involves a new perception of residential space in people's common concerns. In my interviews, every participant mentioned that the environment of Australia is one of the vital reasons that helped them make the decision to immigrate.

5.3 Spatial practices in Perth

Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these "real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city". They are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize. (de Certeau, 1998, p. 97)

Spatial practice, especially walking, is a direct means of attuning to the local natural world. In some situations, we could think of driving as a motorised variant of walking, although with obvious differences of speed and exposure to the

particularities of the environment. Many of the diasporic experiences of my participants involve combinations of walking and car travel; however, for diasporic subjects, “their story begins on ground level, with footsteps”(de Certeau, 1998, p. 97).

5.3.1 First drive through Perth

On 10th July 2008, during a rainy winter midnight, I arrived in Perth as a newcomer. In the dim streetlights, the taxi was driven slowly through the silent, wet and narrow roads, while I was looking for the house of my homestay. I felt so disappointed that it appeared I was exiled to an isolated and lifeless rural village. Since I was born, I have lived in big cities with the population of at least twenty million. My first impression of Perth was its small size and a sense of desolation. The next morning, I could not wait to visit all the landmarks in Perth city. “Small” was the only feature which I could identify of the new place, as there were no skyscrapers, no modern shopping malls, no eight-lane streets, no luxury restaurants, not even crowds. However, with exploring the landscapes, I found something big: big birds, big trees in the downtown, big public lawns, big free-access parks and big open beaches. During the process, I have felt that my sense of living space has expanded while my sense of the place has gradually changed. (auto-ethnographic data)

A similar experience is described in the work *Sense of place* by George Seddon: at first sight on WA, he felt “cheated” (Seddon, 1972, p. xiii) because “there was no landscape” (p. xiv). But he “learned to change focus” and “became interested in the structure of these landscapes”, which come from “very small things rather than from ‘scenery’ as conventionally understood” (Seddon, 1972, p. xiv). He regards that “this change in the scale of attention is also one of the moves of science” (Seddon, 1972, p. xiv).

The changing perception of Perth is a common process for new immigrants from different areas of China. During my interviews, I was attracted by similar memories of the participants. It is interesting that everyone can describe the details of the first day they arrived. When I interviewed Li Lijun (N12), the wife of a master chef from Shanghai, the most prosperous city in China, she had only been in Perth for one week, after two years of living apart from her husband, who works for a Chinese restaurant in Mandurah.

That day he picked us up [Li and their daughter] at the airport. On the way to Mandurah, I felt more and more disappointed because of the scenes of desolation...In Shanghai we used to have a walk after dinner. The first day here, we went out at about seven o'clock in the evening. It was getting dark, nobody else on the streets, not even cars. I was wondering why I came here. On Shanghai's [crowded] streets, if you stop, the numerous pedestrians behind you will push you walking forward. (N12, L. J. Li, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

For Chinese people who came from bigger cities, their first impression of Perth contrasts tremendously with their memories of their hometown. Li's memory of Shanghai is not only nostalgic, which, as Seremetakis explains, "freezes the past in such a manner as to preclude it from any capacity for social transformation in the present" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 4), but also a process of establishing a new sense of living space through the relationship with a new place.

Both the memory of Shanghai and the memory of the first day in Perth are "moments of stillness" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 16) in Li's life. The moments of "imaginary historicization of life-path and events" are individual as well as collective (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 16). It also is evident in the experiences of earlier diasporic Chinese subjects, even those who have moved to Perth from the larger Australian cities. A couple, Yang Linlin (N6) and Zhao Ying (N7), has lived in Perth for fifteen years. In 2000, after they finished two years of study, they drove four thousand miles from Sydney to Perth, across the Australian landscape. When they recalled the day they arrived in Perth, they have a tactile memory of the hot weather. "It was November, the end of November. The deepest impression is the weather, very hot. I remember we parked the car for a while. When we were going to drive, it was hard to touch the steering wheel as it was like burning" (N7, Y. Zhao, personal communication, November 29, 2014). Sydney is mild, but Perth is hot. The contrast is not between two countries but between two cities, about the distinction between cities in terms of climate. From these interviews, I found that all the first memories of Perth are about its natural surroundings and people's experiences of vision, smell, touch or sound. As in Seremetakis's work, sensory memory is "a form of storage. Storage is always the embodiment and conservation of experiences, persons and matter in vessels of alterity" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 28). The storage of previous memories carried from homelands or previous living places is awakened by the new experiences

obtained through new spatial practices. The senses, as Seremetakis (1994, p. 29) argues, “defer the material world by changing substance into memory”.

Li, Yang, Zhao, and my memories of first driving in Perth, whether it was in taxis or with family, involved the transformation of personal spatial practices as new arrivals. We began to know the natural surroundings of Perth through our first motorized forays, although our senses differed from the others’. Since the first moment of stillness, our individual diasporic spaces have started to extend and overlap. In other words, in spite of different backgrounds, every individual diasporan shares similar experiences through personal bodily senses via the same material environment. In Seremetakis’s words, sensory memory or “the mediation on the historical substance of experience is not mere repetition but transformation that brings the past into the present as a natal event” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 7). The local material world is combined in their sensory memories to create a new collective perception of a communal living space. As J. C. Ryan indicates, “the content of memory varies with collective cultural meanings and values” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 193).

5.3.2 Daily walking

In addition to motorized travel, another important spatial practice in diasporic experience is walking. In Chinese culture, people believe walking after dinner can help digestion. For modern Chinese people, walking with family members or neighbours in the evening is a way to relax after a long day and maintain close interpersonal relationships. While chatting, they walk to night markets, plazas, seaside or riverside, parks or community gardens, with children riding bicycles and dogs running around them. The evening walking expands their living space and makes cities vivid and agreeable. The nineteenth-century American naturalist Henry David Thoreau describes the joy of walking:

In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society. But it sometimes happens that I cannot easily shake off the village. The thought of some work will run in my head, and I am not where my body is – I am out of my senses. In my walks I would fain return to my senses. What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out

of the woods? I suspect myself, and cannot help a shudder, when I find myself so implicated even in what are called good works – for this may sometimes happen. (Thoreau, 1862/2001)

The outcomes of walking or its “productions” for J. C. Ryan can be “a poem, an artwork, a song, a photograph, a story unwritten but recorded in the mind as an oral narrative, a transformation of values or a return to the bodily senses” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 54). In local diasporic spatial practices, walking by the riverside or in Kings Park continues its function in Chinese everyday life. For the family of Richard Wang, walking after meals is a regular routine. Richard owns an antique shop close to Hyde Park, which is the biggest park just north of the centre of Perth. In addition to evening walking with his wife and daughter, on some sunny days, Richard enjoys walking alone from his shop to Hyde Park after lunch. As an antique expert, he has good taste in appreciating diverse cultures and arts. He often takes photos of street views, such as flowers, trees, wall paintings, old buildings or even shadows under the sun. He is interested in the history and culture of Hyde Park, even in the legends of lingering ghosts. With all the posted pictures on his social networks, he shares interests with Chinese friends and develops his business networks. In Richard’s experience, walking will “never become quite familiar” (Thoreau, 1862/2001, para.16) as in Thoreau’s argument that “there is in fact a sort of harmony discoverable between the capabilities of the landscape within a circle of ten miles’ radius, or the limits of an afternoon walk, and the threescore years and ten of human life” (Thoreau, 1862/2001, para.16). J.C. Ryan comments that Thoreau’s view stresses “the relationship between the landscape and his ambulatory body” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 55). Ryan defines walking as “a dynamic interconnection between being and becoming” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 55). Although Hyde Park is very much a modified ‘natural’ place because it was formerly a wetland and landscaped as an English urban park and renamed after its namesake in London (City of Vincent, n.d.) (the same situation happened in Robertson Park Wetland, North Perth, see Chapter Nine), for Chinese people who come from crowded cities, the perception of nature is constituted by the natural elements such as plants, waters and earth. In their understanding, nature is not merely indigenous, but rather the current entire natural surroundings around them and with which they communicate. During walking, Richard became fascinated by Perth’s environment via his seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and emotions, while these sensory memories

construct his sense of place. Hyde Park is both a ‘natural’ place and a performative space for his embodied practice. Walking links the landscape of Perth and the diasporic people “through the corporeal invocation of the senses, both in the moment and over time” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 55).

5.3.3 Collective practices

Apart from individual experiences, collective diasporic practices provide an extraordinary example for my study. In November 2014, I participated in an annual meeting of the Shandong (a northern Chinese province) Association in Perth. At nine o’clock that morning, I arrived at Charles Paterson Park, the meeting place on the bank of the Swan River. In the chilly wind, I met with the new director of Shandong Association, Duan Xin (A1). He was sitting quietly beside a huge dining table alfresco in the middle of a vast lawn. I was surprised that he was alone and he told me the meeting began at ten o’clock. He went there at eight o’clock to occupy the table, as on weekends the barbecue area is always popular. We spent the next hour waiting for the other members, who had arrived on time with all families and various traditional Chinese foods. It was obvious the meeting was not as formal as I had supposed it would be.

Duan explained that the purpose of annual meeting of the association is to gather local Shandong people in order to help them make new friends, communicate living experiences and share useful information on topics such as children’s education or business cooperation. Except for the children, half of the members were forty to fifty years old with the other half consisting of young people who were the next generation of immigrants or overseas students. The meeting was actually a party for all the participants through chatting, eating, drinking or walking with friends. In the warm sunshine, facing the mild wind from the Swan River, listening to melodious birdsong, watching seagulls swimming, tasting delicious dumplings or Dim Sums and grilled steaks and sausages, I realized that meeting was not the main reason to participate. Instead, the simple pleasure of sharing the space with families and fellow members is a particular achievement for the people. This spatial practice connects the dispersed diasporic individuals within collective networks, which is one aspect of

Brah's definition of 'diasporic identities' of "transnational identifications encompassing 'imagined' and 'encountered' communities" (Brah, 1996, p. 196). However, engagement with the natural world and vibrant materials, such as the combination of Chinese and Australian foods, in individual and collective spatial sensory practice, complements her notion of 'diasporic identities' as both tangible and abstract networks.

In terms of collective spatial practices, I have become particularly interested in the fact that the Chinese residents living in the suburb of Como have voluntarily elected a director of the neighborhood committee (居委会主任). A neighborhood committee director is the most basic governor in Chinese governmental system. The director, with the duty of helping the residents solve domestic problems, is elected from representatives of local residents under the supervision of the government. In China, the position is not superior but is on behalf of the official power. The elected director in Como, Li Hong (N5), is the wife of Duan Xin, the director of Shandong Association. They live in Como with over ten Chinese neighbours. Since they met each other in the community playground, the short geographical distance has enabled all the families to communicate frequently.

Since 2013, during the Christmas holiday, Duan and Li have organized an annual self-drive group tour to Albany for all the neighbours. On the trip, Duan and other fathers drove and went fishing while Li organised the mothers to prepare foods and look after the children. After a certain period, all the other families came to regard the couple as their neighbourhood leaders and thus they consult with them when they meet problems. In the chat group of Como residents on social media, the name of Li Hong shows "主任" (the director). Instead of home parties or gathering in restaurants, this neighbourhood group is interested in outdoor activities. During school breaks, they take the children to the strawberry farm for self-picking and fresh tasting. In spring 2015, they went to John Forrest National Park for a wildflower tour. From the photos they posted on the social network (Wechat, QQ), I can share in the moments during which they walked through the bush while appreciating blooming native flowers and taking photos of the kangaroos they met on the paths.

Their collective spatial practices establish another sense of place, in which a place becomes a landscape shared by people "when they take action to shape it in

accord with their taste and needs” (Seddon, 1972, p. xiv). This kind of walking in the national park with fellow members also connects the sense of becoming and belonging. Walking becomes “a means of participation” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 55) when the bodily senses transform the natural world into a dwelling space. The “dwelling perspective” (a concept defined by Ingold as “an active engagement with the constituents of his or her surroundings”) explains that, “relations among humans, which we are accustomed to calling ‘social’, are but a sub-set of ecological relations” (Ingold, 2000, p. 5). In diasporic experiences, spatial practices in the environment deconstruct the sensuous dichotomy of ‘here’ and ‘there’ and create a sense of equal belonging to the new land and a tangible, rather than imagined, sense of community. The diasporic identity, however, will look very different from the kind that has become a stereotype of hybridity or ‘in-betweeness’ in a social context as this hybridity of identity refers to “migrant groups [that] have hardly ‘melted’ into the social ‘pot’ of the nation as expected” (L. J. C. Ma & Cartier, 2003, p. 35).

In addition, the group spatial practice provides the possibility of changing the perception of the director from the embodiment of a governor’s power into an image of a civilian leader. In contemporary Chinese society, there is always a contradiction between authoritative powers and civilian rights. Therefore, as the basic executor of the official power, a director of neighborhood committees is not a popular role in the lives of ordinary people. In the Como instance, although Li Hong still regards her new title as a kind of joke, she is pleased to assume the responsibility of helping neighbours and Chinese friends. From a previously ordinary Chinese civilian to an accepted neighborhood director in Perth, Li Hong has experienced a transition in her social roles. The spatial practices integrate her individual identity into a collective sense of belonging as well as connecting diasporic natural and social spaces.

5.4 Domestic and suburban spaces

Social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such ‘objects’ are thus not only things but also relations. (Henri, 1991, p. 77)

For Henri, the social space is considered a network of relations involving material and informative exchange. Following his stress on relationship, I conceptualise the diasporic social space as network of dynamic interconnections between places and people. Turning back to the example of the couple Yang Linlin and Zhao Ying, several years after they moved to Perth from Sydney, they bought a farm of 20,000 square meters in the south area of the city. They lived there with their three daughters and three horses. Riding training was the first activity for the young girls. In 2009, I was invited to their farm for horse riding with my four-year old niece, who came to visit me for her Chinese holiday. It took us forty-five minutes to drive there from downtown. The farm was huge with a simple timber gate in front of it, and several giant unknown trees standing along the boundary. We were so excited to see a kangaroo suddenly jumping across the road just ahead of us. My niece was cheering as the only previous time she saw kangaroo was in a zoo in Queensland. Yang told us that this happened everyday in the area. We entered her farm along a dried muddy path. There was a lonely house in the middle of the land. Compared to the vast area, the house looked very tiny, although it had five bedrooms. Beside the house there was a stable for the horses, with several riding suits in different sizes hung on the timber walls. In her attempt to ride a horse, my niece was stepped on by the horse. After six years, when I asked her about that Australian trip, she could only remember the farm and the horse.

In my interview with the couple Yang (N6) and Zhao (N7) in 2014, the family had since moved back to downtown Perth for the girls' studies and rented out the farm. I was curious about their motivation for buying the farm in the first place. The husband, Zhao, told me his dream from his youth. He grew up in Beijing, the capital city of China. In spite of his typical urban background, Zhao was fascinated with riding horses like the old-style heroes in the movies. Since his adolescence, he has been to many places around Beijing for horse riding, such as the Inner Mongolian grasslands. Getting older, he had a dream of owning a big farm, with several children and a herd of horses. Finally, he realised his dream of living on a horse farm in Perth. His children were exposed to the natural world on a daily basis, unlike living in the suburbs where parks would be their only outlets. Although now they live in the city, his wife still feels proud of her daughters' personalities fostered in the farm:

It makes the girls very open and strong as local Australian children. I found now in China, even some boys are turning feminine. The reason might be that the most [Chinese] fathers are busy at work and the mothers spend more time to stay with the children...I feel the father's influence on my girls is obvious, such as their [the daughters'] love for the natural world. (N6, L. L. Yang, personal communication, November 29, 2014)

Their love for the natural world is not inherited from the father as a natal capability, but rather, in Tuan's view, the appreciation of the places for a young child "is certain to differ radically from that of an informed adult" because "feeling for place is influenced by knowledge" (Tuan, 1977, p. 32). In my view, sense of place is formed via sensory memory and spatial experiences with tangible material engagement. A good example is my niece's memory of the farm as the jumping kangaroo and the step of the horse. Farm life presents not only the local natural place but also a domestic space for the diasporic family. The space of the farm is both abstract and embodied. It was an abstract dream for the father, but later became a material property in their reality and an embodied childhood memory for the children. The spatio-temporal configurations that comprise their diasporic space involve environmental and social domestic spaces.

Tuan (1977, p. 17) thinks of place as "a type of object". For him, places and objects "define space, giving it a geometric personality" (Tuan, 1977, p. 17). The changing space of the family is of particular interest and relevance. For the last two years, they have lived in Nedlands, a downtown area close to the girls' school. Even without horse riding, however, the girls' living space is not static. Recently, they have raised a German shepherd. After school and on weekends, they walk the dog along the riverbank, running, swimming and meeting with other dogs. After class the father Zhao Ying accompanies them to play netball at the school playground. "It is really convenient for sports here. When we go to exercise, it takes less than five minutes from our home to their school" (N7, Y. Zhao, personal communication, November 29, 2014). Their sense of the new place has embraced the outside space into their living space through everyday practices. "Place is not static" (Pink, 2009, p. 30), but an "event" (Pink, 2009, p. 31). In this formulation, the changing places for the family are the dynamic processes of events enacted through their "social and material relations and practices" (Pink, 2009, p. 32). Although they have moved far from the farm, in their new urban life, nature is not remote as they can enjoy the blue sky and bright

sunshine within the Perth environs. As Pink argues, “place and our relationship to it cannot be understood without attention to precisely how we learn through, know and move in material and sensory environments” (Pink, 2009, p. 33).

For de Certeau, space is “a practiced place” (de Certeau, 1998, p. 117). In terms of the sense of space, Tuan asserts that “spatial ability becomes spatial knowledge when movements and changes of location can be envisaged” (Tuan, 1977, pp. 67-68). Compared to the geography of crowded Chinese cities, the natural features of Perth provide a sense of unrestrained space to local diasporic Chinese. The family of Richard Wang has not had a lot of in depth or immersive experiences in the local environment, but they greatly appreciate the city’s natural elements. Their thirteen-year-old daughter, Helen (N4), was born in Sydney. Every year, she goes back to Beijing to visit her grandparents. She gave a very interesting reply to the question of her impressions of Perth and Beijing. “Here [Perth] is quite far from China, but the environment is more natural and healthier...[Natural] means you can see the blue sky, many trees and fewer people” (N4, H. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014). Richard told me although they have lived here for over ten years, they have never been to Kings Park during the annual Spring Wildflower Festival because of the crowds (N2, R. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014). His wife Ada (N3) said that in fact they like the park: “we go to Kings Park avoiding any festivals. Actually, the place is very beautiful as one side is the lawn and on the other side you can see the city view and the Swan River” (N3, A. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014). Moreover, the reason why they moved to Perth from Sydney was that Sydney is too crowded. When they lived in Beijing, if they wanted to enjoy a larger space, they had to go to a park by train. However, in Perth, “blue sky and white clouds are always there” (N3, A. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014). For them, space is very much linked to place as different places present distinct senses of space. Their perception of nature is as an interchangeable term for space, which is not beyond the city limits. Thus their sense of nature as a urban space, constructed by the entanglement of all daily senses experienced in cities, challenges the traditional Western/Australian conception of nature, which is often a visual aesthetic one. Nature, in Giblett’s understanding, “was made into art; cultural transformation of nature into art occurred in early nineteenth-century Europe” (Giblett,

2003, p. 3). The sense of nature as space coincides with the idea of “a full bodily interaction with land” (Giblett, 2003, p. 4).

Nature is in everyday spaces. For the participants, the natural space is regarded as domestic and suburban, in contrast to its more common sense of wilderness. When discussing the house rules of some Western families, Richard had a particular view of the notion of nature: “they [the Western families] keep their yards very clean, grow plants and build swimming pools, getting closer to nature” (N2, Richard Wang, interview, transcript). His view of nature comes from everyday experiences in domestic and suburban spaces. In common Chinese thinking, plants and the practices of swimming are something apart from the domestic sphere. When they occur in a domestic space, the limited space becomes more natural and open. In my understanding, his view represents the experiences of Chinese people living in big cities. Pot plants are popular for those people who live in a flat located thirty or forty meters above the land where they try to get a sense of the natural world. A swimming pool at home implies not only a huge space but also a sense of outside space. An Asian friend bought a house recently. On the social media, he posted a picture of the swimming pool in the backyard and added the comment ‘no more travel’. Plants and swimming pools bring the open and public environment into a limited, private domestic space. For urban people, the sense of nature is scattered throughout the routines of their everyday lives, such as seeing blue sky and white clouds on the bus to work, hearing the wind during a rainy night, smelling aromatic flowers in a vase, raking up the fallen leaves in the backyard. As Giblett asserts, “nature is ordinary, the stuff of work and everyday life” (Giblett, 2012, p. 2). Nature is not only wilderness; it also acts as a space for the dwellers, no matter whether they live on a farm or in the city.

5.5 Conclusion

My hometown is near Yangzi River. It is windy there. It is located on the south bank of the river with a lot of trees. Generally, it is more comfortable and cleaner than the northern [Chinese] cities. (N1, W. Zhao, personal communication, November 5, 2014)

This is the description of a Chinese overseas student of his hometown in south China. The sense of a clean environment is similar to the view of nature of Richard Wang. This chapter focuses on the first research question, which investigates the participants' senses of natural world after they relocated in Perth. In my interviews, there are several common opinions about the sense of nature.

The first one is nature as a space. Most of the participants cite the reason why they chose Perth as their new place of settlement as its comfortable ecological environment. In contrast to the big Chinese cities, there are more lawns, parks and playgrounds, also with long accessible coastlines. Within urban life, they spontaneously associate nature with the daily environment they experience via bodily senses. The first impression of a place is indeed a sense of space, not only visual, but resulting from all bodily interactions with place. For the participants, nature is an interchangeable term for space: larger, cleaner, quieter and more comfortable. This view of nature is not in accordance with that in Western philosophy and culture, which is concentrated on "the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings" (Williams, 1976, p. 219). Only in such an everyday space, engaged with nature, people can smell the flowers, listen to the birdsong, face the seaside wind, and sweat in the warm sunshine. Nature as an object becomes alive and vivid, or 'vibrant' in Jane Bennett's term (2010), not an abstract image in the mind or pictorial representation in paintings or TV programmes. Therefore, the relationship between diasporic people and the natural world is intimate, dialogical and interactive, not reflecting the static representation of nature found elsewhere.

The second common view is that nature is clean and orderly. Combined with the notion of 'nature as a space', this view deconstructs the binary between wilderness and urbanisation. The conception of a wide, clean and orderly space actually derives from the imagination of an ideal living space when Perth Chinese residents lived in a crowded and noisy Chinese metropolis. Their desire for blue sky, clean water and fresh air has silently transformed their sense of nature to the sense of living space because they regard the sky, water and air as the most important elements of the natural world. This awareness adheres to the principles of ancient Chinese medicine, and the philosophy of Feng Shui (which I discuss in Chapter Seven). In the construction of a living space, engagement with these natural elements provides a sense of comfort and health. This sense of nature is beyond the geographical division

between urban and rural, originating in everyday spatial practices and daily sensory experiences in lived places. Convery, Corsane and Davis regard sense of place as “evoked precisely to explore the difficult to grasp ‘livedness’ of place, places as they are experienced through everyday life” (Convery et al., 2012, p. 4). Besides the urban and domestic space of daily life, the examples of group tours to Albany and national parks illustrate the deconstruction of city/wild binary. The gathering is not an exploration of the wild; rather, it provides opportunities to communicate with fellow diasporans while learning about local landscapes. As social activities in diasporic life, collective spatial practices extend the urban living space by blurring the distinctions between city and wildness.

The third common view is that nature is a substantial part of their daily lives. The three girls bring their dog to the riverbank everyday; Richard’s family walks outside after dinner; the student Zhao Wei (N1) goes fishing at the seaside on weekends; and local Shandong people meet in the park regularly. During these experiences, they obtain knowledge of the local ecology and exchange views of their lives in the new land or show their life situations to the Chinese relatives via social networks. The interactions between the natural world and the diasporic Chinese are dynamic. Cultural meanings of landscape, as Convery, Corsane and Davis argue, are “not universal but specific to particular societal groups” (Convery et al., 2012, p. 4). For the Chinese diaspora, the sense of nature comprises the way they engage with current life, and the sensory memories carried from previous experiences, both individual and collective. In their perception, nature is constituted as an ordinary space for their dwelling, remembering and expecting. In the process of transformation, the pivotal point is “understanding how people construct their sense of self in place” (Convery et al., 2012, p. 4). In this way, nature acts in the role of an agent in the continuing construction of peoples’ own perceptions of becoming and belonging.

From their experiences, let us turn back to the basic idea of ‘nature as an agent’. Firstly, the sense of nature forges a new spatial connection between homeland and hostland as well as between past and present. The geographical differences of the hostland lead to a comparison between living environments. Different senses of places are formed through daily sensory experiences in varied places in reference to the material world. In the context of the new diasporic space, the sense of place in the past is associated with that sense in the present through different spatial practices.

Thus, remote geographical places are linked together through sensory memories. Nature helps us to assess the values in our life experiences and reconstruct new spatio-temporal spaces. Secondly, the sense of nature moderates individual and collective experiences. In a shared diasporic space, collective spatial practices reinforce the social relations between individuals and evoke a communal sense of belonging. Spatial practices with community members transform individual senses of being and belonging into communal ones and thus the sense of a diasporic community becomes tangible and meaningful to their new life. Lastly, nature as an agent facilitates the establishment of diasporic space from both the social and natural perspectives. Diasporic identities stem from “somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (Hall, 1997, p. 52). This constantly transforming identity is produced in a diasporic space, which as Henri argues, is “a set of relations between things (objects and products)” (Henri, 1991, p. 83). Therefore, the diasporic space can be considered a new social form with a network of relations through the agency of the natural world. For Henri, it was not “‘inscribed’ in a pre-existing space. Rather, a space was produced that was neither rural nor urban, but the result of a newly engendered spatial relationship between the two” (Henri, 1991, p. 78). From this perspective, the people’s senses of their material surroundings have transformed their self-perceptions through diasporic livelihood. This also invokes the second research question, which concentrates on the influences of everyday life on the constitution of diasporic cultures.

CHAPTER SIX

SPATIAL PRACTICE OF FENG SHUI

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five, by drawing upon in-depth interviews with diasporic Chinese participants and my own reflections, I explicated how WA's natural world is perceived as part of a social space in the daily experiences of local Chinese people. People's inhabiting behaviours within the space can be regarded as individual or collective spatial practices. In the discourse of spatial practice, Chinese traditional cultures present a paradigm of the understanding of nature's effects "on the human species by a subtle blend of observation and correlation with external phenomena" (Paton, 2013, p. xi). In much literatures, the Chinese philosophy of Feng Shui is understood in parallel with the environmental ideas. For example, based on a particular view of natural energies, Paton argues that Feng Shui has brought "a voice in the modern development of environmentalism" (Paton, 2013, p. xiv). In this chapter, also related to the material environment, Feng Shui is discussed as a specified method of spatial practice, both externally and internally.

In academic contexts, Feng Shui is defined as a Chinese geomancy, a popular folklore, and a cultural phenomenon whereas its mundane role is to "select auspicious sites and design configurations for human settlements" (Bonaiuto, Bilotta, & Stolfa, 2010, p. 24). In my research on the dialogical relations between WA's Chinese diasporic people and the local natural world, Feng Shui is regarded as both an ancient practical system of Chinese traditional environmental philosophy and a key spatial practice transposed to Perth environment. In accord with the research questions about the conversion in the people's perceptions of nature through livelihood, the discuss of Feng Shui is closely bound up with the Chinese sense of the material world, the traditional guidelines of everyday living and the interdependent relationships between human and non-human surroundings in the spatial assemblage.

In this chapter, firstly, I review some basic ideas of Feng Shui, including its tenets, history, values, and its applications in Chinese cultures and history. Following the review, the main part of this chapter, 'Feng Shui as a sustainable environmental

practice', explains the significance of Feng Shui in contemporary society; how the local diasporic Chinese people apply the principles of Feng Shui to their daily spatial practice; and how Feng Shui as a material practice has intensively engaged in their environmental experiences through senses. It aims to demonstrate that the traditional idea of Feng Shui is a way for the Chinese people in Perth to perceive their natural surroundings through their spatial practices. On the other hand, the traditional Chinese thought of Feng Shui is also transforming through the people's practices in the new place.

Feng Shui as an important point in the discussion of spatial practice in local environment is related to the participants and my ethnographic work. The idea of the discussion comes mostly from the participants Richard and Ada Wang, who were the first Chinese family I visited in this project. As an antiques collector addicted to Chinese cultures and history, Richard was an essential participant in my project. During conversation with Richard and Ada, I was impressed by their understanding of traditional Chinese thought, especially the idea of Feng Shui. In the following studies, I found that although most other participants did not allude to any Feng Shui principles in the interviews, they actually practice Feng Shui implicitly in their daily lives.

Through the research, I found that the ancient geomancy Feng Shui is a series of practical theories in modern diasporic society related to the natural world. As with history, it has involved plenty of social issues concerned with relationships between the material world and humans. In the current age, it still acts as a life guide in house selection and interior decoration, applied to keep a balanced relationship with local environment of Perth. Notably, through practical applications, the participants develop an understanding of Feng Shui with a sense of the environment. This understanding inherits the traditional view of Feng Shui as a spatial practice to maintain a harmonious relationship between the macro universe of the environment and the micro-universe of human beings. Regarding the external balance and the inner harmony between the dwellers and their physical surroundings, the embodied spatial practice of Feng Shui enables the diasporic people to adopt the new material world in Perth linked to their traditions.

6.2 The idea of Feng Shui

Feng Shui is an academic discipline. In Wang, Joy and Sherry's work, "the 3500-year-old discipline known as Feng Shui – literally "wind and water" – has roots in *yijing*, a source book on archaic systems of cosmology and philosophy" (J. Wang, Joy, & John F. Sherry, 2013, p. 242). The name "wind and water" of Feng Shui is regarded "more than natural forces;" rather, "they are prime movers of *chi* [qi]", "the 'universal and positive energy' that overwhelms every form of animate and inanimate life" (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 26). Qi is the key point to explain the basic theory of Feng Shui. It is composed of the configurational force of matter; thus it is regarded as a physical rather than a spiritual phenomenon, in spite of its invisibility (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 12). Qi is never still but transformative. Paton comments that qi is "formless and soundless and floats between heaven and earth, manifesting life from its connection with material form" (Paton, 2013, p. 90). Qi integrates heaven and earth, while it is "the core of Chinese cosmology" (Giblett, 2008, p. 180). The philosophic idea of qi, which "synthesizes spirit and matter as an undifferentiated whole", is "a way of conceptualizing the basic structure and function of the cosmos" (Tu, 1989, p. 69).

As the energetic fluids "in the atmosphere and inside the body" (Graham, 1989, p. 325), qi is "the breath of the universe" (Sullivan, 1962). Giblett (2008, p. 180) indicates that "in western cosmology the body and the earth are both made of the same inert and desiccated matter" while "in Chinese cosmology the body and the earth are both made of the same living, vital breath." In traditional Chinese thought, the qi of body and the qi of the cosmos are united into the whole; the former is controlled and influenced by the latter (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 17). This perception of the intertwined relationship between human body and earth is essential to understanding the practices of Feng Shui principles. Referring to the relationships between human and the physical surroundings, Feng Shui is the earliest Chinese scientific textbook of environmental knowledge, especially in its study of the relationships between human and the environments (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 4). In practice, the geomancy of Feng Shui emphasises the material property of qi (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 13). Giblett argues that *qi* is linked to water because in an ancient Chinese book *Guanzi* water is "the blood and qi-breath of the earth" and consequently

qi is the “water and breath of the body” (Giblett, 2008, p. 180). Therefore, in Chinese history, Feng Shui was applied to the studies of wind, water, landforms and the arts to maintain a harmonious relationship between humans and the material environment.

The history of Chinese science, for Paton, was “after all, nought but part of the history of an international endeavour of humanity to conceptualise the physical surroundings, and fengshui represents an early attempt to do precisely this” (Paton, 2013, p. 4). The book *Guanzi* is an outstanding work of Feng Shui theory. Its discussion of landscapes, landforms, soils and waters has become the foundation of the idea Wuxing in Feng Shui principles (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 6). The “five basic elements” of Wuxing, “metal, wood, water, fire, and earth – are considered components of all matter and events, both concrete and abstract, providing a philosophical scaffolding that enables understanding of the universe” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 242). The earliest literature about the relationships between the natural world and humans is the ancient Chinese medical text, *Huangdi Neijing*. This book distinguishes people with various physical conditions as being under the influence of natural surroundings according to the concept of yin/yang (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 10).

The dualistic idea of yin and yang in Feng Shui principles are “two opposite entities that attract each other and complete themselves” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 27). The “complementary and dynamic forces” of *yin* and *yang* are “referencing the positive and negative duality of matter” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 242). Every Feng Shui phenomenon can be explained by the theory of the positive or negative sides of qi. The qi of yin/yang explains every natural phenomenon in Taoist thought. Only when there is balance between the inner *yin qi* and *yang qi*, the body, every living thing, and the cosmos can be healthy (Yude Wang, 2010, pp. 13-19). Further, “the Great Harmony” – ‘Tao’ embraces “the whole universe is in the process of fusion and intermingling like fleeting forces moving in all directions” (Tu, 1989, p. 72).

From the perspective of philosophy, “harmony” is the central achievement for the practices of Feng Shui. Many traditional values in the indigenous Chinese beliefs, Confucianism and Taoism, are situated in the concept of ‘harmony’, which is a pervasive theme in ancient Chinese philosophy. Harmony is “the most important element Chinese people use to regulate the transforming, cyclic, and never ending process of human communication” (G.-M. Chen, 2008, p. 2). Taoism is a theory with a cosmic view with an emphasis on self-cultivation in order to achieve harmony

between individual and environment (Giblett, 2008, p. 160). In Taoist view, “since all modalities of being are made of *ch’i*, human life is part of a continuous flow of the blood and breath that constitutes the cosmic process. Human beings are thus organically connected with rocks, trees, and animals” (Tu, 1989, p. 74). Giblett describes the Taoist view as a correlative thinking “between the organic microcosm of the (human) body and social macrocosm of humanity” in which there are “no fixed boundaries between the internal self and external world” (Giblett, 2008, p. 160). Symbiosis is the core process and concept associated with harmony in Taoist philosophy. This is in contrast to the idea of harmony in the Confucian doctrines, by which harmony is understood as “the need to maintain a mutually respectful relationship and a common concern for humanity and morality” in order to “arrive at uniform views” (Leung, Koch, & Lu, 2002, p. 7). To gain a better understanding of harmony from a Taoist perspective, it is necessary to reinstate the notion of the body from a Taoist point of view in which mind and body are polar, rather than dualistic, concepts. In other words, harmony for Taoists is first of all harmony in a body, or in a “psychosomatic process” (Callicott & Ames, 1989, p. 158). Giblett states that for Taoists, there exists a correspondence between “the organic microcosm of the body and the social macrocosm of humanity” and a vital balance or harmony between “interrelated elements in a holistic cosmos” (Giblett, 2008, p. 161).

Therefore, the application of *Feng Shui* principles is rooted in the view of harmonious yin/yang relations. Every physical and natural phenomenon is considered as the result of these two opposite entities of yin and yang. Feng Shui “aims to evaluate the energetic quality of a specific place through the analysis of the yin and yang elements and the test of their balance” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 28). In this light, it can be asserted that Feng Shui is an ancient Chinese form of environmental humanities. The traditional Chinese “Tao” pursues the “harmonious blending of inner feelings and outer scenes” (Tu, 1989, p. 78). Accordingly, Feng Shui may also be considered “a Chinese environmental aesthetics, which is the merging of the self into an expanded reality through transformation and participation” (Tu, 1989, p. 77). In Tu’s statement, Feng Shui as a Chinese environmental aesthetics is to “suspend not only our sensory perceptions but also our conceptual apparatus so that we can embody nature in our sensitivity and allow nature to embrace us in its affinity” (Tu, 1989, p. 78). In this sense, the practices of Feng Shui have offered rich patterns that inform the

idea of spatial experiences in the material surroundings through embodied and physical participations.

6.3. Feng Shui as a sustainable environmental practice

In history, China is a country of Feng Shui, following the Feng Shui principles from the ancient generations. The Feng Shui masters have even written the whole history of our country. (N2, R. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014)

In the interview, I was impressed that the participant Richard Wang had an insightful understanding of Feng Shui. Indeed, Feng Shui principles have profound influences on the quality of the social life in Chinese history. As a spatial practice, its basic tenet is “to avoid strong winds and to maintain access water in order to accumulate ‘Qi’, or the vital energy that is believed to support all life” (Wu, Yau, & Lu, 2012, p. 502). Chinese Feng Shui masters believe that yin qi and yang qi produced five primary natural elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. All the five elements are involved in “both a generative and a destructive circle” and “each element corresponds to specific environments, activities, cardinal points, seasons, etc.” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 28). In practice, the masters aim to “achieve a balance between the five elements in a given environment by adding the missing element or eliminating those in excess” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 28).

Since the very early centuries, Feng Shui has inspired sacred constructions, such as temples, imperial residences and tombs, which symbolise the supreme powers and utmost dignity of the ruling classes. The designs mainly concerned “integrating the building with the surrounding environment” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 27). Some representative constructions are the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. The Great Wall, the most monumental construction in China, “follows the topography of the landform and confers grace and majesty to the milieu without altering the environment’s physiognomy” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 27), along with the north ‘dragon artery’ in *Feng Shui* terminology [Interestingly, Paton (2013, p. 11) argues that the Great Wall appears as the earliest reference to the idea Feng Shui in *Shiji*, referring to “the crime of cutting through the veins of the earth” by Meng Tian

the builder in the Qin dynasty. The Forbidden City is located in the heart of Beijing, on 720.000 square meters of land. Lip argues that in the Forbidden City, “the arrangement of interior and exterior spaces, the emphasis on symmetry and balance, as well as the use of structural and non-structural elements, reveal the Chinese concept of space and form with reference to Confucian principles and Taoist ideas” (Lip, 2009, p. 11). The Temple of Heaven, “the place of worship for the emperors”, sits outside the Forbidden City:

The orientation and siting of the temple is subject to all the rules spelt out in feng shui. Usually northeast or southwest directions are avoided, as they are believed to be the doors for evil. Main doors are painted with images of the Door Gods or dragons and they are guarded by two (yin and yang) stone lions. The siting of a temple also depends on the surrounding environment and natural topography. Where possible it is best to have hills behind and waterways in front. (Lip, 2009, p. 97)

In constructions, besides “the balance of *yin* (cool) and *yang* (warm) colours”, “auspicious dimensions and numerology” must be considered under the geomantic guidelines and the rules of Chinese symbolism (Lip, 2009, pp. 96-97). Five colours, red, yellow, green, white, and black, respectively correspond to the five natural elements and the yin/yang natures: red is fire (yang); yellow is earth (yang); green is wood (yin); white is gold (yang); and black is water (yin). In addition, odd numbers characterized as yang are good, while even numbers are inauspicious with the quality of yin (Lip, 2009, p. 97). Basically, in empirical applications, Feng Shui principles guide sustainable environmental practices because Chinese people believe that only when the qi of yin/yang become balanced, will the human body and its physical environment be considered healthy and harmonious. The role of Feng Shui in modern society has not been replaced by developing science and technology. Instead, it is taken into account by modern science because of its positive contribution to architecture, environmentalism and psychology.

6.3.1 Practices of Feng Shui in everyday life

Feng Shui was applied as an approach to and art of siting buildings and burials and its role expanded with the ancient Chinese agricultural civilization. From the perspective of evolutionary theory, “site selection plays such an important role in human survival, reproduction and welfare” as “natural selection should have favoured individuals who were motivated to explore and settle in environments likely to afford the necessities of life but to avoid environments with poorer resources or posing higher risks” (Han, 2001, p. 76). Therefore, Feng Shui has “positive values for human well-being in a pragmatic rather than a strictly superstitious way” (Han, 2001, p. 76).

Generally, in the agricultural era, an ideal site “is enclosed by many mountains and rivers, which not only prevent *Ch'i* from blowing away but also accumulate *Ch'i*” (Han, 2001, p. 78). The features of the location should “serve as landmarks giving people a good sense of direction and a clearly defined territory” with “the magnificent mountain in the back, the smaller mountains at the right and left, the rivers, and the front hills” (Han, 2001, p. 84). Between the front hills and the residential site, there should be flat, smooth, and continuous grasslands. This ideal Feng Shui location is described as “a semi-enclosed space” that offers more information “about the surroundings and help[s] their cognitive evaluation” (Han, 2001, p. 81):

The surrounding mountains form a natural defence and a shelter against exposure to cold, northern winds, and detection and attack by enemies. The prospect at the front is helpful for spotting approaching enemies from a great distance...Because of the uniform and smooth ground texture of the relatively flat grassland in the centre of the ideal *Feng Shui* location, it is not only easy for movement...but also convenient for farming, grazing, and construction...The flowing river in front makes it difficult for the enemy to advance quickly. It can be used as a safe and quick route to escape from impending threats. It evaporates water to increase humidity, decrease temperature, enhance air circulation, and purify air. Thriving vegetation is another indicator of good *Feng Shui*. Because *Ch'i* is the origin of all life, a place where flourishing plants grow signals plenty of *Ch'i*. Vegetation rich in numbers and species attracts diverse animals, which implies more available resources. An ecosystem with great diversity of flora and fauna indicates a highly stable habitat. (Han, 2001, pp. 82-83)

In contemporary societies, the popularity of Feng Shui has increased not due to its original purpose of survival but to improve the quality of social life. Since Feng Shui developed in agricultural or rural contexts, it seems difficult to practice it in urban environment that usually lacks “the standard reference points of mountain peaks and bodies of water” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 502). However, some of the guidelines are still applicable and even primary in the modern societies. People consider not only the physical and environmental factors, but also “the spiritual significance and luck that a particular location might bring to its occupants” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 502). In regard to the choice of a proper residential site, people’s concerns focus on both the external environment and “the internal spatial arrangement and directional aspects of the housing” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 503). In China, builders always choose good locations backed by mountains or facing beautiful waters on which to construct properties, as the environment conditions are the first consideration for most house buyers. According to the principles, bad qi from the bad locations will lead to spiritual or physical problems. On the market, “properties that are seen as having this negative energy often cost between 30% and 50% less than comparable homes with better Feng Shui” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 504). The most expensive properties are usually located at the foot of mountains, beside rivers or the sea, or adjacent to golf courses with open views of natural scenery. In modern Chinese cities, a popular design for residential blocks is to enclose them with landscaped gardens around the buildings.

As the principles of Feng Shui are complex and recondite, generally Feng Shui masters rather than laymen manipulate the practices. Although most of the judgements “are intuitive and somewhat subjective,” there are two main guidelines from the *Feng Shui* schools (Han, 2001, p. 77). One is based on “analyses of physical phenomena at a site, such as topography, vegetation, and climate” while the other “emphasizes using a compass to judge proper site orientation and placement for settlements according to the residents’ birthdays” (Han, 2001, pp. 77-78). Another traditional role of Feng Shui masters is to seek optimal burial places, “based on the burial of one’s ancestors in an auspicious site according to the flow of *qi* through the surrounding landform” (Paton, 2013, p. 6). In Feng Shui terms, these appointed locations are called yin zhai (yin house), compared to residential houses, which named yang zhai (yang house) (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 113). Chinese people believe that a congruent choice for one’s ancestors’ yin house will bring good fortune to the

offspring. Even though the State Council of China has promulgated the regulations for funeral and interment to require cremation instead of burial in urban areas (“Chinese Regulations on Funeral and Interment Control,” 1997) since 1997, many people still choose a proper place in the public funeral home to bury the cinerary casket of their passed relative according to the Feng Shui masters’ advice.

Moreover, The Feng Shui adherents willingly consult the Feng Shui masters not just for siting a location but also when they are aware that their control of life is limited. The adherents comply with masters’ advice expecting “a master to adapt prescriptions to match their particular measures” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 254). For the adherents, the Feng Shui master “serves as a facilitator, enabling them to re-align with the forces of nature” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 246). Personal destiny and one’s annual fortune and Feng Shui are “a hierarchy of forces” which are regarded as having distinct effects on individuals but Feng Shui “enables an individual to exert control and agency” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 247). Through participating in Feng Shui rituals and applying for the objects, “people manage their space so that negative forces are kept at bay and positive forces are encouraged, thus enhancing the flow of *qi* and maintaining harmony with the environment” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 247). In a common ritual:

[a] master will visit a private home or office and thoroughly examine the designated site and surrounding area. He will then prescribe actions, which may include remodelling a room, rearranging furniture, and strategically placing certain items; he may even suggest that a person abandon a location. The items consumed in Feng Shui practices vary greatly: they can be objects such as clocks, fish tanks, copper coins, or wind chimes. Consumers purchase Feng Shui items not only to achieve their desired outcomes, but also for the hope created and sustained in the process of trying. (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 243)

It is not surprising that Feng Shui apps for the smart phones have become available for commercial use in recent years (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 254). In most current Feng Shui practices, the masters serve as “a sacred source” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 242) to mediate the natural surroundings and individuals, promoting the consumption of Feng Shui as a profane commodity.

6.3.2 Environmental balance in Feng Shui

Feng Shui is not simply an instrument for the masters' rites. Some of its doctrines have intermingled with universal guidelines of everyday life for Chinese people. When my Australian teacher told me there were several pine trees in his front yard, my initial response was the pine tree is said not to be suitable for planting at home as it always appears near graveyards in China. However, many Western people plant pine trees near their houses as a symbol of longevity. Most Chinese people know more or less the Feng Shui principles with greater or lesser degree of accuracy. In Australia, with its growing population of Asian immigrants, Feng Shui has become an acceptable idea as a part of traditional Eastern culture. In the mid 1980s, when foreign banks were allowed to set up in Australia, one of the leading banks in the world, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, "send out teachers of *feng shui* to advise on the siting and building of its subsidiaries" (Rolls, 1996, p. 308). Rolls affirms that Australian real estate agents employ Chinese "who have some knowledge of *feng shui*" to sell properties to Chinese clients (Rolls, 1996, p. 309):

The position, the design of houses has as much importance as a bad number. If a back door is clearly visible from the front door money will run straight through the house, but too many hidden corners can hide devils. A sloping back garden offers no support to a family, a T-junction aims a sword at it. A telegraph on an electric light pole outside a house is bad, it can divide a family, so can a television aerial in the centre of a roof – it might have to be moved a couple of metres. A nearby water canal can wash good luck away. (Rolls, 1996, p. 309)

Rolls insists that apart from its obscure and mysterious components, Feng Shui is a science of "land arrangement" – "it is reasonable to call it a science since it devises such beautiful building positions" (Rolls, 1996, pp. 307-308). From the perspective of environmental balance, Feng Shui is universal because it aims to cultivate "scenic beauty and [a] serene environment" (Lip, 2009, p. 137). For overseas Chinese living in Perth, their understanding is simple but practical. Richard Wang, the antique collector and dealer, has immersed himself in traditional Chinese cultures for many years. He regarded good Feng Shui in a house as mainly meaning "a neat and tidy place, no matter how big and luxurious the house is" (N2, R. Wang, personal

communication, November 16, 2014). Richard related Feng Shui to cultural phenomena in every aspect of life, especially housing. Ada completed Richard's view with the examples drawn from people's behaviors:

To (local) Chinese, Feng Shui, more or less influences their lives because most Chinese immigrants have lived in China for many years. For instance, when they buy a house, they may choose the one on a quiet street instead of on busy roads or right on an intersection. They may choose a house facing the sun i.e. towards the north [in the southern hemisphere], with more sunshine thrown into the rooms. It would be very comfortable. About home ornaments, they may place some vases and green pot plants. (N3, A. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014)

Ada's opinion reflects the common criteria of most local Chinese people in house purchasing, although some of them may not realize that the criteria originate from Feng Shui principles. Differ from property purchase in Chinese cities, where most people can only afford apartments in residential blocks, in Australia, there are more private houses available on real estate market. This market offers more possibilities for the practice of Feng Shui guidelines when people make decisions. From a scientific perspective, their choices in line with the principles of Feng Shui can also be regarded as the "the understanding of how the geographical features of a site and its topography affect buildings internally and externally" (Lip, 2009, p. 75). The first consideration is the location. As Ada said, Chinese people prefer quiet streets to the main roads and avoid roundabouts as these places are noisier with more traffic, which will adversely affect the sleep of the residents. In addition to the traffic conditions, the presence in the surrounding environment of parks, good public schools, close hospitals or convenient shopping areas is also taken into account. Moreover, if the land is uneven, it is better to live on the higher side to get better views and to be safer on raining days. Some of these criteria, seemingly derived from Feng Shui principles, are similar to the ideas of "the spatial configurations and physical features" described in modern evolutionary theories (Han, 2001, p. 77). For instance, "an even, uniform, and continued ground texture will provide more depth cues and a sense of continuity which will reduce spatial ambiguities, enhance accurate estimates of spatial extent, and allow more information to be extracted" (Han, 2001, p. 81).

In addition to the external environment, the examination of properties also includes “the internal spatial arrangement and directional aspects of the housing” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 503). Lip states that architectural elements and landscape are “combined with natural spaces in harmonious settings” (Lip, 2009, p. 141). Regarding to the quality of a house, wind and sunlight are the most fundamental elements and they are also key factors in Feng Shui such as qi is easily scattered by the wind. In Feng Shui principles, “to provide both heat and light, sunshine in front of the building is very important, which means that in the northern hemisphere the home should face south” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 503). However, in the southern hemisphere, in Perth, with its sunny Mediterranean climate, this requirement is not necessary as the sunshine is too strong and people do not expect the temperature to be too high at home. However, the house buyers still prefer a wide sphere of vision from the windows to “accentuate the beauty and intuitive quality of nature” (Lip, 2009, p. 141).

A favourable house also relies on the internal orientation such as “shape, layout, interior design, and furniture placement” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 504). Feng Shui principles emphasise that “the flow of Qi within a structure will affect its occupants” and “which directions the property faces and sits are fundamental issues with regard to making the flow of Qi smoother and more appropriate for the internal spatial environment” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 504). A laymen relies upon “an individual’s first feeling about a residential property” which Feng Shui explains as “represent[ing] whether the Qi is compatible with them, and thus able to bring good luck and health” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 503). Furthermore, many local Chinese renovate the house to cater for their living habits. I visited most families of the participants and I noticed that there dwellings have two common demands: a second Chinese-style kitchen and the reconstructed yards with less lawn. The reason for the Chinese kitchen is that in Chinese diets, there are many fried dishes, which cause kitchen fumes during cooking. This cooking method is not well suited to the Western style kitchen with its open design, often connected to living areas. Generally, a Chinese kitchen is enclosed with a strong-powered ventilator, applying the Feng Shui principle, the kitchen fumes are harmful qi. A site with healthy qi or “revitalising qi (*shengqi*) is good for those who dwell on it. On the other hand, a site with little *shengqi* or with *siqu* (harmful energy) would effect an undesirable influence on the dwellers” (Lip, 2009, p. 76).

In Chinese homes, another focus on renovation is usually in the yards, front and back. In Chinese traditional architecture, a landscaped garden is a critical issue to be taken note of, embodying the harmony between natural elements and people. Chinese people appreciate yards that evoke the sense of “anticipation and excitement” which “must be present in a well-conceived garden design” (Lip, 2009, p. 141). In general, in a Chinese garden, the essential features are “*shan* (hill) and *shui* (water)”. Otherwise the garden is unsatisfying as it lacks “the contrast of yin and yang or fluidity and solidity” (Lip, 2009, p. 122). The most desirable water element is derived from natural sources such as rivers, streams or waterfalls. However, in modern cities, there are not much natural amenities and thus “the man-made element must be so well-made that it appears absolutely natural” (Lip, 2009, p. 120). Other landscape elements as trees, plants, rockeries, and bridges should “blend with each other to form a symphony of natural beauty” (Lip, 2009, p. 120). All the elements are sorted in to yin (negative) and yang (positive) forms to be posited in solid and void spaces (Lip, 2009, p. 120). The solid elements of rocks, bridges and stones provide backdrops of yang qi while the fluid waters are used as intuitive elements, which can bring the balanced qi to circulate energy and life through the landscape (Lip, 2009, p. 123). Colorful trees, plants and flowers decorate the landscape and symbolize the life of nature. Although in Perth, the landscaping principles related to Feng Shui are less applicable to small, modern properties, for spatial arrangements are still required to be in “harmony, continuity, contrast, balance and rhythm” (Lip, 2009, p. 120). Local Chinese prefer plants named with auspicious meanings, such as kumquat, money jade or lucky bamboo. Feng Shui principles emphasise access to green areas or the presence of indoor plants as they can produce positive energies. Some traditional families are also willing to place a fountain in the yard that they believe water is “a purifying element that can regenerate energy, turn a negative force into a positive one, and contrast the negative effects of the secret arrows” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 30). For the Chinese, an ideal yard is “a part of a harmonious system” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 503) in the residential property.

The participants Richard (N2) and Ada (N3) regard Feng Shui as a cultural phenomenon that distinguishes the behaviours of Asian from Western people:

I think in some ways they [Western people] have opposite ideas from the Chinese. For instance, we do not like a house on the street corner, but Helen's [their daughter] schoolmate, lives in such a house. In our opinion, it is not safe because of the passing vehicles. They do not care. Instead, they like the location because the land is bigger and it has the views in two directions. I think this is a cultural difference. (N3, A. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014)

Lip argues that "Chinese architectural form and space has always been achieved and influenced by Chinese beliefs, culture, philosophies, and the physical and natural environment" (Lip, 2009, p. 142). If we acknowledge Feng Shui is a material existence, the practice of Feng Shui is the "spatial organisation" in "designing residential environments to promote wellness and harmony" (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 27) between the physical surroundings and human. Richard (N2) understands Feng Shui as being associated with personal feelings as Feng Shui is more an interior idea than an exterior one. As So and Lu argue, Feng Shui "declares that what you make of your location and environment on the face of the earth also affects your interior peace" (So & Lu, 2001, p. 61). Richard and Ada agree that to the modern Chinese people, the perception of Feng Shui involves the ideas of environmental balance between all the natural elements and human lives. "Actually there is no identical word for 'Feng Shui' in other countries. I think the similar concept is the idea of environmental conservation" (N3, A. Wang, personal communication, November 16, 2014).

6.3.3 Inner balance through the spatial practice

In contrast to the complex principles, the ordinary Chinese people have simple and basic understandings of Feng Shui: it means a 'personal feeling' to Richard and 'environmental conservation' to Ada. Within the local cultural environment, it is more acceptable to explain Feng Shui from a scientific perspective, especially in the two disciplines of "restorativeness and control" (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 30). The Feng Shui construct is "the restorative and healing property of an environment" (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 30). For example, if the occupants feel comfortable within a tidy, neat house with green plants, it can be considered that the Feng Shui of the place is

beneficial to them. Another illustration is the factors in maintaining the inner balance of a human body via the dimension of control. Bonaiuto, Bilotta and Stolfa address that in Feng Shui practices, “lack of control is considered stressful and affects the energetic equilibrium of an environment and, consequently, that of its occupants” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 30). With help from the masters, people believe the efficacious rituals enable them “to achieve greater life power” and help them to maintain their yin/yang balance (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 247).

Although the restorative and healing function of Feng Shui practices on human well-being are not demonstrated by science, “there are many assertions coming from Feng Shui experts promulgating its multiple advantages, such as overcoming hidden ills or maximizing comfort through the modification of one’s living environment” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 29). With Feng Shui practices, people are not “passive victims of environmental characteristics” but the ones who “focus on the interactive nature of the people-environment relationship, which views physical settings as a vehicle to promote human effectiveness and well-being” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 29). This point is represented by the participants’ idea that the natural world of Perth is clean, tidy and fresh, as cited in the previous chapter, and by the cases of renovations of kitchen and yards in the participants’ houses. Local Chinese diasporans design the house to present more natural views through the windows, altering the balance between the indoor and outdoor spaces. This setting of direct contact with green areas aims to “improve environmental satisfaction and reduce stress” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 30). In addition, the participatory experience of gardening (discussed in the Chapter Nine) is a part of local lifestyle in the Chinese community. Cultivating Chinese vegetables and local fruits trees is recommended as a particular way of healing their nostalgia and facilitating an adaption to the new environment.

Bonaiuto, Bilotta and Stolfa argue that “control is considered one of the most important dimensions of the people-environment relationship and is often associated with high levels of environmental satisfaction” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 30). In Feng Shui principles, control of the environment facilitates “human well-being and psychophysical balance” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 31). A typical instance is that Feng Shui suggests not locating the bed facing the door in a bedroom, since the occupant can be seen from the outside of the room and in an unsafe position. In Feng Shui practice, the bed should be located in the position that “allows a clear sight of the

bedroom door but it should never be placed directly opposite the bedroom door, known as the ‘coffin position’ in Feng-shui” (So & Lu, 2001, p. 63). A sense of crisis or loss of control is the main reason for Feng Shui adherents turning to masters, “who offer pre-emptive protection against forces beyond their clients’ control” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 246). Although overseas there are not many professional Feng Shui masters, local Chinese can still adhere to some basic principles of Feng Shui in their everyday experiences, as these guidelines help them promote both physical and inner balance. In Perth, the people implicitly refer to Feng Shui for positive outcomes, hoping to bring good fortune as well as to avoid negative outcomes. Numerology demonstrates the notion that “certain numbers are ... lucky or unlucky because of the words they sound similar to in Chinese” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 504). Eight is a lucky as it sounds similar to the character for prosperity, while four is an unlucky number because it reproduces the word for death. Thus, many local Chinese choose supposedly lucky numbers for their cell phones, home addresses and license plate numbers. Feng Shui plays a role as “a form of therapy”, “easing psychological burdens” by transmitting hopes to adherents to carry on a positive life, even in difficult situations (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 252).

Giblett notes that the correspondence between “the body of the universe and the human body” is part of “the equivalence between microcosm and macrocosm” (Giblett, 2008, p. 159). His view echoes a Chinese old saying in relation to Feng Shui factors: Tian Shi, Di Li, and Ren He. Lip explains that “if the heavenly influences are auspicious [Tian Shi], the geographical features are beneficial [Di Li], and the actions of man are in harmony with the social, cultural and political situations [Ren He], then the feng shui is auspicious” (Lip, 2009, p. 75). In my understanding, Ren He can be explained as harmony between the surrounding environment, including all natural, social, and interpersonal elements. From the perspective of environmental thinking, Feng Shui contributes to facilitation of “a general awareness and cultural openness to different ways of conceptualizing the environment and the well-being of its occupants” (Bonaiuto et al., 2010, p. 29). By applying Feng Shui to the small universe of our body, there exists an intuitive correlation between Feng Shui and the inner balance in our physical and spiritual world.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter continues the discussion of the diasporic Chinese people's senses of the material world from a traditional perspective of Feng Shui. It follows a conventional process of knowing in diasporic experiences. For the Chinese people, their traditional cultures greatly influence their sensory practices and diasporic knowing. Feng Shui enables them to explore physical settings while constructing an interactive relation to the natural world with a familiar approach. Therefore, the discussion of the application of Feng Shui to contemporary diasporic practices also addresses all the research questions about the conversion of diasporic perceptions of nature and self-conception through the dynamic interaction between the diaspora and local natural world in daily experiences.

Feng Shui is a Chinese geomancy, an important component in traditional Chinese folklores and cultures, and the earliest and the most resonant ecological philosophy in Chinese history. In the past, its principles, "the science of creating harmony and balance between the forces of nature and influences of man, play[ed] an important role in the creation of the environments of power inhabited by the imperial rulers" (Lip, 2009, p. 11). In contemporary society, it still influences the environmental thinking through the idea of "an ordered harmony of wills without an ordainer", which represents a Chinese model of the world (Tu, 1989, p. 68). Tu argues that this environmental philosophy is the most basic stuff that "makes the cosmos ... neither solely spiritual nor material but both" (Tu, 1989, p. 68).

Traditional Feng Shui theory is "an abstract term to represent the pseudo-physical science of climatology and geophysics" (Lip, 2009, p. 75). In practice, it is "the art of placing, siting and orienting a building so that the building is in harmony with everything that surrounds it" while "it is also the art of finding balance in nature and harmony in the home and the working environment" (Lip, 2009, p. 75). Its application to modern building designs has promoted the integration of environmental balance from an ecological perspective to contemporary architectural aesthetics. "It addresses cultural and social issues of a particular society and makes reference to the natural, metaphysical and cosmological influences" (Lip, 2009, p. 75). In addition, Chinese housing designs with landscape gardens under the guidelines of Feng Shui

are well-conceived architecture complexes that “offer a countless variety of spatial experiences ranging from the sense of anticipation and surprise of multi-directional perspectives to magnificence in scale and vistas” (Lip, 2009, p. 141). In the design of a landscaped garden, apart from creating contrast, “a sense of balance and harmony is also important” (Lip, 2009, p. 141). Moreover, Feng Shui practices emphasise both exterior and interior balance of environments. Its ultimate aim is the pursuit of an inner balance of the micro universe of human beings. In Feng Shui rituals, “time and space are given sacred meanings not apparent to ordinary people” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 258). Feng Shui masters analyse the time and space according to individual determined destiny and fortune. Wang, Joy and Sherry comment that “in this imagined space and time, negative everyday events are neutralized, and participants are able to re-focus and reorient themselves to return to their actual reality” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 258).

Through these practices, Feng Shui guides people to “live in alignment with nature as well as maintain social harmony in interpersonal relationships” (J. Wang et al., 2013, p. 257). Although with the development of urbanisation, traditional Feng Shui has been confronted with some dilemmas for its fundamental principles developed in the ancient agricultural eras (Yude Wang, 2010, p. 233), it is still applicable and convincing in achieving harmony between external environmental arrangements and internal bodily balance. Modern people apply Feng Shui to seek a harmonious life rather than taking wilderness trips, because in an urbanised environment, Feng Shui is more accessible than remote wilderness areas. From the perspective of environmental philosophy, Feng Shui acts as a conduit between the invisible and the visible, between the physical and the spiritual, between the macro cosmos and the micro human being.

Discussed in the context of environmental humanities, in contemporary diasporic Chinese community, Feng Shui is both an energetic dimension of material existence and an embodied spatial practice. On one hand, Feng Shui principles teach the people to evaluate every single element of the new environs: earth, sunshine, wind, plant, and water. From a broader perspective, it requires the study of local ecological environment such as the seasons, the weather and the landscape. Therefore, by adherence to some Feng Shui principles in the spatial rearrangements of their everyday lives, diasporic people gradually obtain knowledge of their material

surroundings. Feng Shui to them is presented in the material elements and displayed as a physical existence. Employing Seremetakis' expression of 'sense', the contemporary diasporic discourse of Feng Shui is also "implicated in historical interpretation as witnesses or record-keepers of material experience" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 6). Indeed, Feng Shui to the people is still a sensory experience, "an autonomous circuit between inner and outer sensory states and fields" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 6). Thus, on the other hand, the perception of Feng Shui of the Chinese metaphysics has been involuntarily replaced with the reflections on the communicative cooperation between human body and the natural world. This orientation toward the harmonious commensalism with nature is inherited from the core of Feng Shui and converted through sensory knowing in the material environment. The perceptions obtained from modern Feng Shui practices "located in a social-material field outside the body" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 5) such as transform abstract Feng Shui ideas into simple concerns about the conservation of the natural world.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LOCAL NATURAL TREASURES

7.1 Introduction

There is a long history of Australian-Chinese contact. Rolls states that “Australia and China lay side by side for 300 million years” (Rolls, 1992, p. 2). A professor at Hong Kong University, Wei Chu-Hsien, believes that in the ‘Spring and Autumn Period’ (553-591 B.C.) in Chinese history, Lu (a big ancient state in northeast China) people had been to Australia. His argument originates from the Confucian work *The Spring and Autumn* that record the eclipses happened in Australia during that time (Wei, 1960, p. 5). According to Wei, the earliest official contact between China and Australia happened in the Ming Dynasty (Rolls, 1992, pp. 8-9). For ancient Chinese people, the discovery of Australia was mediated by its natural world, including celestial phenomena, kangaroos as a world wonder, and marine trade in timbers, gemstones, and sea products. These agentic materials enabled ancient Chinese people to explore the land of Australia. In modern times, the diasporic people still percept the environment and communicate with it through particular local substances.

Following the discussion of local spatial (Chapter 5) and energetic (Chapter 6) experiences, inspired by Bennett’s (2010, p. x) argument that materials are “potentially forceful agents”, this chapter aims to answer the research questions that ask about the diasporic perception of the material world, the self-conception of the diaspora, and the dynamic relationship between the diasporic people and the natural world, through the engagement with some typical WA’s natural substances including wood, jewels and wine. Before the discussion, it is necessary to introduce the Chinese view on the non-human forces and influential engagements with the natural world in human practices. Chinese thought holds an understanding that “anything has to be placed in a meaningful relationship with everything else” (H. Ma, 2012, p. xi). Jane Bennett (2010, pp. 34-35) explains how the Chinese tradition illuminates the disposition of things via “shi”. “Shi is the style, energy, propensity, trajectory, or elan inherent to a specific arrangement of things” (Bennett, 2010, p. 35). In her

understanding, the term “shi” demonstrates that ancient Chinese knew well of relations in the whole assemblage of human being and non-humans. She argues that “shi” is a Chinese idea of the “vitality of materialities”, which “names the dynamic force emanating from a spatio-temporal configuration rather than from any particular element within it” (Bennett, 2010, p. 35).

In line with the Chinese understanding of the essences of natural elements, this chapter offers a glimpse of the Western Australian natural products of jarrah, sandalwood, gemstones, pearls and wines, which were important to Chinese history and culture and are still meaningful in contemporary Chinese diasporic experiences. Modern Chinese diasporic people present a more active attitude in the adaptation to local life as shown by their engagement with local material agents with cultural resonances compared to earlier Chinese immigrants. They purchase jarrah furniture, burn sandalwood incense, wear local jewels, and drink grape wines. These practices have gradually become distinctive features of their new Western Australian lives, even though the experiences are still intertwined with traditional Chinese cultures. Moreover, recent food scandals, toxics toys and water and air pollutions occurring in China “have made affluent Chinese consumers increasingly interested in green products” (Gao, Morrell, & Hansen, 11/2011, p. 648). However, in contrast to the connotations of ‘green’ for Western consumers, to the Chinese consumers, ‘green products’ refer to “‘trustworthy[iness],’ ‘fashion,’ ‘high quality,’ ‘safe[ty],’ and ‘health’ and less to low pollution or nature conservation” because most Western countries are pioneers in environmental protection (Gao et al., 11/2011, p. 648). Local Chinese diasporans introduce their Chinese relatives and friends to Australian products as representations of a healthy and modern lifestyle. The materials enable the people (both the fellow diasporans and their relatives and friends back home) to constitute a tangible sense of the diasporic place.

In my ethnographic work, Richard Wang as a furniture dealer and an antiquer is still an important participant in the discussion of the natural products of local plants and of gemstones. Being in the trade for nearly twenty years, Richard provided rich information about his personal experiences engaged with natural products from both China and Western Australia. On the collective level, I employ wine as a case study because it informs the participants’ considerations of local natural products and the local environment. At the beginning of every section, there is a review of the Chinese

culture and history of the relevant natural product in order to highlight the tradition and transformation of Chinese perceptions of the natural materials. This review echoes Bennett's idea that vibrant materials evoke the diasporic sense of place and the material world.

7.2 Wood

In 1829 Western Australia was proclaimed a new colony. After several months, a Chinese carpenter, Moon Chow, arrived in Fremantle on the ship 'Emily Taylor'. For the following twenty years, he made a living by "building houses, shops and warehouses in the new port town" (Atkinson, 1985, para.1). Early Chinese settlers earned their living as gardeners, laundry workers, grocery owners, and builders. For a long period, carpentry was one of the earliest and commonest occupations in Chinese furniture factories and the Chinese retained "a considerable share of the furniture trade" (Atkinson, 1985, para.12). Rolls asserts that "Chinese carpenters were never as plentiful as furniture makers but they put up numbers of buildings in Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory" (Rolls, 1996, p. 116). Immersed in an industry related to Australian flora, Chinese workers found "good stands of White Cypress Pine" in the Northern Territory. Rolls asserts that the Chinese "quickly realised the quality of that aromatic, termite-proof, beautifully figured timber and cut it both for export and the local market" (Rolls, 1996, p. 118).

In China, the first modern wood treating plant was established in 1911. It started the history of industrial application of treated wood (Gao et al., 11/2011, p. 644). However, in recent years a shift "from industrial application, such as railway ties, pilings, and timbers, to more residential uses, such as landscaping, park bridges, and decking" has transformed Chinese consumption levels of treated wood (Gao et al., 11/2011, p. 644). The reason for the shift may result from the increasing Chinese new urban middle class with its expanding interests in the imported green products.

In this section, two local trees of Western Australia, jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*), are discussed in relation to Chinese consumption and cultural practices within the diasporic process of adapting to the

hostland. Jarrah is well-known in the Chinese furniture industry and also famous for the food product of jarrah honey. Sandalwood in Western Australia and South Australia is “severely exploited to supply China and India with fragrant wood for joss sticks” (Hope & Parish, 2008, p. 56). In recent years, local sandalwood products such as sandalwood essence oil and perfume have also become popular on the Chinese market. In the face of higher demand from overseas markets, a conservation ethos has emerged in local society, which has also become part of the diasporic process.

7.2.1 Chinese culture of wood

Wood has been an indispensable natural element (in the Feng Shui principles, see Chapter 6) in the earliest Chinese knowing of the universe. Since ancient times, wood has been involved in all aspects of eating, housing, clothing, travelling, and even religious sacrifices. It is not hard to imagine that there was a “wooden era” at the start of Chinese society as the ancient people lived in the warm, arborous midlands (S. Chen, 2007, p. 76). Chen analyses how Chinese characters illustrate the intimate relationship between Chinese cultures and the element of wood. The first example is diet. In Chinese writing, the characters for many foods from plants are comprised from the radical structure “木” (wood) (S. Chen, 2007, p. 76). In addition, in the primitive era, fire used for cooking was a milestone invention in the early civilisation. The earliest source of fire was from the natural phenomena, such as volcanic activity and wildfires in forests caused by lightning or heating. Instead of keeping the fire by adding more wood or plant materials, through the way of a fire-drill employing with porous wood sticks, such as willow or white poplar, humans could make fire on demand (Yilu Wang, 2015, p. 251).

The second example of wood’s value to Chinese culture is in housing construction. Carpentry was one of the most prevailing occupations in Chinese handicrafts history. The most notable Chinese carpenter, engineer and inventor Lu Ban, who lived in the Spring and Autumn Period, was regarded as the patron saint of all Chinese woodworkers and builders. An introduction to his woodwork and inventions can be found in numerous ancient Chinese books, such as *The book of lineages* (the third century B.C.) and *The origin of things* (the fifteenth century). In

modern Chinese language, the meaning of the Chinese character for treated wood (材) has been extended to refer to people who have particular outstanding talents. Chen (2007, pp. 77-78) indicates that in Chinese characters, there are over forty words related to ancient building engineering. Besides, the wide utilization of wood in furniture manufactures has never altered. From the Chinese characters for “table”, “bed”, “chair” and “dinnerware”, it is obvious that wood was the most popular material in furniture construction. Woodwork catered to most daily necessities during ancient times and superb handiwork in wood was carried forward by generations while the raw material of gold, jade, stone or bones remained rare natural resources. Therefore, even the most common household items, like combs, washbasins, and toys, were made of wood. Although woodwork is difficult to preserve over centuries, a few remarkable works can be found in museums and some antique shops.

The third example is the development of Chinese agriculture. About five thousand years ago, ancient China was the earliest country to plant mulberry and grow silkworm in order to get silk (S. Chen, 2007, pp. 76-77). Later, linen (around 2000 years ago), made by the fibres of flax plants, and cotton (around 1000 years ago) was imported from overseas to produce garments (Shuai & Liu, 2010, p. 282). The Chinese characters for mulberry (桑), linen (麻) and cotton (棉) all include the component of wood (木) (S. Chen, 2007, pp. 76-77). Another utilization of wood in ancient agriculture was the methods of grafting which represents the skilled agricultural techniques in ancient China. Agricultural tools were also made of wood. Although most of the wooden tools were finally abandoned with the development of modern technology, the wooden tools used in pre-modern agriculture are recorded in Chinese characters particularly in some ancient books (S. Chen, 2007, p. 77).

Wood existed in every aspect of primitive Chinese society. The Chinese character for wood manifests itself in the military world, as wood was the main material for crossbows, arrows and spears. In *yamen* (the official place for criminal inquest), it provided varied instruments for physical punishment. In transportation, people made the junk, canoe, boat and ship, benefiting from wood's buoyancy; on land, most parts of the traditional oxcart and carriage were made of wood (S. Chen, 2007, pp. 77-78). The most typical example of the relationship between the natural element of wood and Chinese culture is the rituals and burial ceremony (S. Chen, 2007, p. 78). A classical Confucian text, *Rites of Zhou*, records that the worship tree

spirits was usual in the Zhou Dynasty (1046BC – 771BC). In some modern Chinese minority villages, they still keep a forest as a sacred, forbidden area. Dai people, in southwest China, traditionally plant a *Ficus hookerianna* in their village, with a small house made of sticks under the tree as the temple for the spirit (S. Chen, 2007, p. 78). In the ancient eras, firewood offered the rite of worshipping Heaven. In addition, the burial ceremony can be regarded as another ritual for the afterlife. The coffin carried the body from this life to its destination of the eternal world, as people believed that the ‘final house’ could keep the body imperishable (S. Chen, 2007, p. 78). The prices of the coffins differed according to the qualities of preservation of the materials that comprised them. Aside from luxury coffins made from gold, jade and crystal, noblemen favoured woods, such as *nanmu* (*phoebe* and *Machilus nees*), red sandalwood, scented wood, eaglewood and rosewood. Cypress, pine and catalpa were common materials for cheap coffins.

Today, the natural element of wood still pervades the Chinese society and influences the Chinese people. Through international trading for centuries, the Chinese people have developed a deep understanding of Australian timbers. In recent years, with the growth of Chinese immigrant population in Australia, more local natural floral products have been introduced to their Chinese relatives and friends in the homeland. To the local diasporic people, their link to the original place is reinforced by these natural resources. Amongst the local plants, jarrah and sandalwood are well known in the Chinese market.

7.2.2 Local jarrah

“Aboriginal, embodied, and poetic” is the impressive description of the jarrah tree in John Ryan’s work (J. C. Ryan, 2014, p. 106). In Australian Aboriginal cultures, Nyoongar people believe that “the *kaarny* of a recently deceased person would be caught and placed in the burned-out trunk of a jarrah to pacify its restlessness” (J. C. Ryan, 2014, p. 106). For Ryan, a jarrah forest can be “a venue for outdoor sport, an antidote to the city, and a reservoir of visual beauty” (J. C. Ryan, 2014, p. 106). For Seddon, “Jarrah is the best known of Western Australian eucalypts, and its timber is famed throughout the world for its toughness and durability – it is suitable for piles,

sleepers, flooring – and in past days, paving blocks” (Seddon, 1972, p. 120). The high market value of jarrah comes foremost from its durability “in exposed and marine situations” (Chamier, 2015, p. 313). Seddon indicates that between 1891-1904, “jarrah exceeded wool in export value” (Seddon, 1972, p. 120). In Western Australia, jarrah is common in huge forests on the coastal plain and the Darling Plateau, which stretch parallel 15 to 30 miles away to the coastlines:

The Jarrah has a straight stem from 40 to 80 feet to the first branch, and ranging from 2 feet to 8 feet in diameter. It grows to perfection on elevated ironstone ranges, which are almost denuded of soil, and where hardly any other vegetation can exist. The best timber is found on the poorest ground and the trees that grow on low-lying lands are of a very inferior description. (Chamier, 2015, pp. 313-314)

In the Chinese furniture-making tradition, the attraction of jarrah is its dark red colour. Chinese consumers favour dark-coloured wood products, such as rosewood, because they believe in the rule that “the darker shades indicate the best timber” (Chamier, 2015, p. 314). The finest quality symbolises a high-end lifestyle and top social status. In ancient countries, the price of rosewood or red sandalwood was equal to that of gold and jade. In history, only the Chinese emperors and their family members had red sandalwood furniture (Pleskacheuskaya, 2003). Dr. Lihua Chan, who has built “the world’s largest private museum specializing in red sandalwood objects,” argues that red sandalwood cannot be measured “in purely financial terms”. In her understanding, instead of “a simply material possession”, red sandalwood is “the essence of Chinese culture itself” (Chan, as cited in Pleskacheuskaya, 2003). In line with the ‘dark colour’ criterion, modern Chinese consumers consider Australian jarrah as a new member of the rosewood family. In order to introduce jarrah to the Chinese market, Chinese timber merchants give it the Chinese name of “Australian rosewood” intentionally invoking expensive rosewood. However, excluding its “kinship” with rosewood, jarrah is distinct in the rank of excellent timbers as it is “hard, close-grained, fibrous, and resinous; secreting a highly pungent acid, which is supposed to give its peculiar immunity against the attacks of worms and insects” (Chamier, 2015, p. 314). The timber is extensively used for furniture and ornamental

purposes. In Western Australia, some timber companies carry on the business of exporting in jarrah worldwide (Chamier, 2015, p. 315).

The first time I found jarrah furniture was in a local shop owned by Richard Wang (N2), the participant who has a special interest in woods as an antique collector and furniture dealer. There was a huge rectangular jarrah desk in the middle of his shop. Under the sunlight from the window, its glazed surface appeared in dark red with the natural wood grain. I gently touched it to imagine the giant jarrah tree as if I could smell the forest scent and read its story. I was enthused about jarrah at first sight. Richard mentioned that it is not appropriate to compare jarrah to the rosewood because jarrah does not belong to *Pterocarpus* but *Eucalyptus*. Interestingly, it is hard to find classical Chinese furniture made of jarrah. He supposed the first reason was that jarrah used commercially only after the Australian colony was founded. Traditionally, the majority of jarrah timbers were applied to outside constructions, such as railways and bridges. Jarrah has attracted the attention of the Chinese furniture industry since a few decades ago. The second reason for the absence of antique Chinese jarrah furniture is that the timber is too hard for traditional Chinese furniture styles, which are designed with many round shapes. As Chamier states, although Jarrah is considered “to be almost indestructible” (Chamier, 2015, p. 314), in some cases, the wood is “rather deficient in strength and tenacity” and it is “very liable to split at the ends” (Chamier, 2015, p. 315). The third reason is that most experienced Chinese collectors do not accept jarrah furniture because they insist that only furniture made of traditional timbers can preserve cultural and commercial values. However, while some Chinese scholars acknowledge that the designs of Chinese traditional furniture present a harmonious and natural aesthetic, they also criticize the phenomenon of over-estimating the commercial value of wood products to the detriment of their cultural representations (Jiu-fang, Ming, & Pei-lu, 2010, pp. 121-122).

Recently, Chinese consumers have developed an interest in another product of jarrah –honey. In Australian honey industry, Western Australia is important because of the “endemic floral sources” of jarrah honey (Dawes & Dall, 2014, p. ix). This world-class honey is unique to WA ("Jarrah Honey Brochure," 2014, 'A unique honey' section, para.1). The popularity of the honey is due to “its medicinal properties” as a “healing honey” ("Jarrah Honey Brochure," 2014, 'A unique honey' section,

para.2). Relevant research demonstrates that it has a “high antibacterial and antimicrobial activity and due to its high hydrogen peroxide level, it can inhibit Golden Staph Bacteria” (“The health properties of Jarrah honey,” 2016, para.1). The attractive selling point of Jarrah honey to the local Chinese buying agents is that the honey has “significantly higher levels of antioxidants than Manuka honey of New Zealand” or leatherwood honey from Tasmania (“Jarrah Honey Brochure,” 2014, ‘The natural product’ section, para.3). It can be served as a daily drink, and used as a wound dressing or treatment for mouth ulcers or bee stings. With a lower glucose level, Jarrah honey is also suitable for people with diabetes (“Jarrah Honey Brochure,” 2014, ‘The natural product’ section). One Chinese agent suggested to me taking it to relieve the symptoms of hay fever, which is frequently occurring during the spring in WA. In a discussion on the local Chinese social network, I found that many local Chinese people have been affected by hay fever since they migrated to WA. According to the specialists they have consulted, most of their problems are caused by an allergen from the flowers of a local bottlebrush, which is often planted as ornamental landscaping in Perth. It is remarkable that the Chinese people are acquiring knowledge of local flora as they apply the jarrah honey to treat the endemic disease. Moreover, they are proud to introduce the honey to their Chinese relatives and friends because this jarrah food is only produced in Western Australia.

7.2.3 Local sandalwood

Another local plant, sandalwood, was one of the most significant Australian natural products in the earliest trades to China. Sandalwood has been known in China for 1,500 years and some species have been cultivated locally for over a hundred years. In the Chinese language, the word ‘sandalwood’ (檀香) first appeared as Zhentan, a derivation of Chandana in Sanskrit (an ancient language of India) in ancient books between AD 319-420 (M. Zhou, 2006, p. 222). In the nineteenth century, “Australia provided two articles the Chinese wanted, sealskins and later sandalwood...The sandalwood trade that continued for many years began in the 1830s from South Sea islands” (Rolls, 1992, pp. 19-21).

Most sandalwood trees in the world are found in India and Australia with a few in Hawaii, Fiji and other Pacific Islands. According to the work of Underwood, in Australia, sandalwood mainly grows in Western Australia with a little found in South Australia and Queensland (Underwood, 1954, p. 1). According to Price (1982, p. 1), there are four species within the *Santalum* genus growing in Australia. *Santalum spicatum* is native to most areas of Western Australia, except “the extreme south-west and Kimberley Regions” (S. Price, 1982, p. 1). It is the only species known as sandalwood. *Santalum lanceolatum* (plum bush) is widespread in Northern Australia. *Santalum acuminatum* (*quandong*, an Aboriginal name) and *Santalum murrayanum* (bitter *quandong*) are found in the southern half of the state and the latter one is more limitedly distributed in the south-west and wheat-belt area (S. Price, 1982, p. 2). All *Santalum* species provide edible fruit to Aboriginal people and local animals. According to Hope and Parish, “emus use the round fruit stones to grind contents of their stomachs and feral camels graze heavily on the fruit...For thousands of years, Aborigines in arid areas have eaten the fresh *quandong* fruits, and dried their flesh to pound into powder for cake making” (Hope & Parish, 2008, p. 56). In Western Australia, the Aboriginal people also use sandalwood to treat the symptoms of “stress, insomnia, eczema and acne” (Mt Romance Australia, 2011a, para.1).

Compared to other commercial woods, sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) is a semi-parasitic branched tree or shrub, growing to a height of eight meters (Loneragan, 1990, p. 1). It was described in *Flora of Australia* by the Western Australian botanist Alexander Segger George in 1984:

Shrub to 4m tall. Bark rough, grey. Branchlets stiff, spreading. Leaves lanceolate to narrowly elliptic, flat, obtuse; lamina 2-7cm long, 3-15 mm wide, concolorous, grey-green; petiole 3-5 mm long. Flowers numerous in panicles, scented; peduncle 3-5 mm long; pedicels 1mm long. Receptacle 1-1.5mm long. Tepals triangular-ovate, 1.5-2mm long, scurfy inside, red-green, persistent in fruit; hair tufts small. Disc shortly lobed. Style 0.5mm long; stigma bilobed. Drupe 1.5-2cm diam.; epicarp green or brown; mesocarp firm, usually adhering to endocarp when ripe; endocarp smooth. (George, 1984, p. 65)

The native sandalwood *Santalum spicatum* covers over 161 million hectares of the vast land in Western Australia, “making this the largest natural Sandalwood resource in the world” (Mt Romance Australia, 2011b, para.1). Its commercial value has been

exploited since the early years of colony. Loneragan asserts that by 1843 “the value of the Western Australia Sandalwood, through its aromatic wood for religious and artistic uses by the Chinese, was rapidly recognized by the early settlers”, and since then, commercial sandalwood production in WA rapidly expanded (Loneragan, 1990, p. 1). In 1845, Western Australia sandalwood “from eastern side of the Darling Ranges” was first exported to China and Singapore for ornamental and religious purpose. Before that, the colonists cut the trees only for building and firewood. The first four tons on the shipment only realised 40 Australian dollars (Underwood, 1954, p. 4). According to Loneragan, by 1848, “Sandalwood had become Western Australia’s primary industry, for example, the export trade of 3048 tons in 1868 was forty times more valuable than all the other timber exports combined from Western Australia” (Loneragan, 1990, p. 1). In February 1908, a ship Windsor, owned by the Britain Steamship Company, struck on the Half Moon Reef, near Fremantle, Perth. On the ship there were 2600 tons of sandalwood as deck cargo carried from Fremantle to Hong Kong (Figure 3) (Western Australian Museum, n.d., para.1). It shows the demand for WA’s sandalwood in Asia during that era.



**Figure 4: WA’s sandalwood piece on the wreck of SS Windsor (1908)
(photographed by Li Chen at WA Museum of Shipwreck
Galleries, Fremantle, March 12, 2017)**

In China, sandalwood powder was made for joss sticks burnt in front of the statues of gods in the temples in traditional religious ceremonies. In the Far East,

sandalwood is used as an important ingredient in the manufacturing of cosmetics. Sandalwood oil, which is distilled from the heartwood and the root, is an ideal fixative in the perfume industry. Before the development of penicillin, sandalwood was widely applied in medicines (S. Price, 1982, p. 2). In addition, it is also exported as a wood for ornamental turnery, such as the carving of images (Underwood, 1954, p. 2). Traditional Chinese handicrafts-men sort out sandalwood products according to the origins of sandalwood. The highest grade is called “old-mountain sandalwood” or Indian sandalwood, with large, straight and smooth branches and a strong scent. The second grade is *Santalum spicatum* from Western Australia, known as “new-mountain sandalwood”, which has smaller branches and a lighter scent. The third grade is from Timor, with knotty bent branches. The fourth grade is named “Sydney sandalwood” and is found in the eastern regions of Australia and the adjacent South Sea Islands.

Australian sandalwood oil has been used in cosmetics, aromatherapy, fragrance and therapeutic markets worldwide. However, the industry is “restricted by the slow growth of the *Santalum spicatum*, the low rate of natural regeneration, the low germination rate and the previously unregulated exploitation of the resource” (Loneragan, 1990, p. vii). It takes 50 to 90 years for a sandalwood tree growing to a commercial size in the arid land of WA. Sporadic flowering is caused by irregular rainfall, and only 1 to 5 per cent of its seeds germinate. Bush fires and grazing also discourage the survival of sandalwood (Loneragan, 1990, p. vii). Before the State Government’s Sandalwood Act of 1929, “uncontrolled competitive marketing” led to slumps and gluts (Loneragan, 1990, p. 3). The government realized that monopoly was necessary to control the market. From November 1923, “a single permit was issued authorizing four firms to operate collectively”, which “subsequently to form the Australian Sandalwood Company in 1930” (Loneragan, 1990, p. 3). In the last decades, more strategies have aimed to preserve this precious natural resource, while more focus has turned to botanic and historic points of view instead of economic interests (Mt Romance Australia, 2011b, para.3).

Plenty of local Chinese have visited the Mount Romance sandalwood factory in Albany, in the Southwest of WA. With the introduction of the Chinese tourism market to Western Australia, Australian sandalwood products have become attractive souvenirs for Chinese tourists. Even for local Chinese people, sandalwood products are ideal for both personal use and gift-giving. In the local market, many local

Chinese beauty salons, Chinese medical clinics and massage shops employ sandalwood oil in aromatherapy, which incorporates essential oils into the body through “ingestion, inhalation and absorption” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 313). During their visit to the factory, people have an aesthetic experience through the sensory experience of the local plant. As Ryan describes the experience, “visitors are invited to hear, see, smell and even taste the tree, considering that the factory itself is outside the natural distribution range of the species” (J. C. Ryan, 2012, p. 313). In addition, the tour emphasises the indigenous people’s “unique knowledge and understanding of the land and its plants” (Mt Romance Australia, 2011c, para.1). Tourists are told that WA’s contemporary sandalwood industry is “designed to respect this intellectual property and the rights and resources of indigenous people globally” (Mt Romance Australia, 2011b, para.2). Visitors are attracted by the products in the sandalwood factory, which are decorated with various indigenous designs. This tour disseminates the idea of the respect for local natural world and for indigenous history and culture. Moreover, it also impresses visitors that the factory uses renewable energy of waste woods to distil sandalwood oil. In order to save water in the process of distillation, they established a water catchment and recycling facility in Albany to collect the high rainfall in this region.

Sandalwood is also involved in local Chinese people’s daily lives. Richard Wang showed a strong interest in local sandalwood. After he found the small pieces sold on the website of Mount Romance factory, he has started to consider making some small Chinese-style artefacts from sandalwood. In conversation with other participants, I was surprised that most of the female participants had heard about the sandalwood fragrance, especially the famous product “1845”. Some of them had bought the perfume as gifts for when they travel back to China. At the factory, I bought the perfume, a small bottle of pure sandalwood oil and some sandalwood mosquito sticks. Every day, in my house, I drop the pure oil in a burner and make the air clean and fresh. Compared to the pure sandalwood oil, which mixes the pungent smell of eucalyptus and the smell of damp soil, the perfume smells sweeter and it reminds me of certain oriental flowers on a summer night. Every spring, I burn the sticks in the backyard to prevent the flies and mosquitos, because traditionally, Chinese people believe the most effective medicine is from the local environment. Through the learning experience, in my understanding, WA’s local sandalwood

represents a high quality natural product, a point of access for the diasporic Chinese people to be able to communicate with the local ecology and a typical Australian view of environmental conservation.

7.3 Jewels

This section discusses the famous Australian jewels, opals and pearls, which have been involved in the Chinese diasporic experiences for centuries. In regard to Australian gemstones, no other valuable rocks are comparable to the opal. Although most precious opals are produced in the Great Australian Basin in eastern Australia, local WA's Chinese people collect opal as for its value as the Australian 'national gemstone' and its Chinese name is Aobao (Australian treasure). Pearl is the other jewel discussed in this section. The pearling industry is rooted in the long history of the Chinese Australian diaspora. Apart from reviewing Chinese engagement with the jewels during early Chinese settlement, this section focuses on the experiences of contemporary local Chinese. In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the jewel and local Chinese people, it is necessary to describe the significant role of jewels, especially the precious rocks in Chinese traditional culture. Thus, the first part of this section is a review of the most important rock, jade, in Chinese history.

Tse argues that in recent years, "Australia continued to be one of the world's leading producers of such mineral commodities as bauxite, coal, cobalt, copper, gem and near-gem diamond, gold, iron ore, lithium, manganese, tantalum, and uranium" (Tse, 2013, p. 3.2). According to a report on Australian gemstone resources over twenty years ago, in 1987, "the gemstone industry in Australia [was] worth about \$1000 million a year. Australia is the world's biggest producer of diamonds, almost the sole source of precious opal and a major supplier of sapphire" (Olliver & Townsend, 1993, p. iii). Although Australia leads the world's production of opal (in Lightning Ridge, NSW and Coober Pedy, SA), only occasionally "boulders with some precious opal are found in the Coolgardie region in Western Australia" (Olliver & Townsend, 1993, p. 3). However, "commercial diamond production in Australia is restricted to the Kimberley region of Western Australia and involves only two major

mining operations” (Olliver & Townsend, 1993, p. x). Some small quantities of other gemstones like emerald and chrysoprase which are used as substitutes for jade in oriental jewelry industry, are discovered in northwest Australia. The report states that “resources within Australia are capable of sustaining the gemstone industry for at least the next 10 years for sapphire, 20 years for diamond and more than 50 years for opal” (Olliver & Townsend, 1993, p. 1).

7.3.1 Chinese culture of jade

China’s jade culture is the most convincing example of the prominent status of stones in Chinese traditions. The history of jade culture is longer than many other Chinese traditions:

Evidence for the production of jade objects have particularly been found at sites of the Xinglongwa (8500-7000 B.C.) and Hongshan (3400-2300 B.C.) cultures settled along the banks of the Liao River in Liaoning Province and Inner Mongolia; the Hemudu culture (5000-3400 B.C.) near Hangzhou Bay in Zhejiang Province; the Longshan culture along the Yangzi River, and the Liangzhu culture (3200-2200 B.C.) around the region of Lake Tai in the Yangzi River Delta. (Guo, Lin, Rawson, cited in Lopes, 2014, pp. 197-198)

Some archaeologists suggest the idea of the Chinese Jade Age existing between the stone and the bronze Ages (Dematte, 2006, pp. 202-203). Dematte quotes a story in the ancient Chinese book *Yuejue Shu* (fl. first century AD). The savant Feng Huzi explained the spiritual qualities of swords to the King of Chu: “by the time of Huangdi, weapons were made of jade to fell trees, build palaces and mine the earth. Jade was also a material with spiritual qualities” (Dematte, 2006, p. 203). In Dematte’s view, the Jade Age is rather “a historical phase to be analysed within an evolutionary framework” rather than “a mythical golden age” (Dematte, 2006, p. 204). Dematte indicates that only nephrite or jadeite (“introduced into China only in the eighteenth century”) can be called jade in the West, “but in traditional Chinese terminology it may be vaguer, so that a number of beautiful stones resembling jade can be termed ‘Yu’ [jade]” (Dematte, 2006, p. 209). However, in contemporary studies, Chinese ancient jade usually means nephrite only. Apart from its beautiful

colours, as a result of “geological pressure”, nephrite has “in addition a compact microstructure that makes it rarer, harder and smoother” (Dematte, 2006, p. 209) than other green minerals. Due to these qualities, jade objects are popular as ornaments, jewelleries and efficient tools.

Dematte argues that jade had a profound impact on the system of ideologies, rituals and iconographies of the leading classes and it “may have been used by elites to achieve and maintain social control” (Dematte, 2006, p. 220). He concludes that jade, “as a material and as an industry, may have contributed to economic and ideological changes, lending support to the concept of ‘Jade Age’” (Dematte, 2006, p. 208). Traditional views on jade include four aspects (Liao, Zhu, & Guo, 2002, pp. 41-43). Firstly, jade is regarded as an agent connecting heaven and the human king because it can transmit information and desires from the gods to the human leader. In ancient Chinese writing, the character “jade” (玉) is the same as that for “king” (王). The pictogram of this character means that the heaven, the earth and human are connected together by jade. In modern Chinese writing, nearly five hundred characters contain the part of the character “jade”. Because Jade connotes agency, jade artifacts such as sacrificial vessels were widely used for ceremonial or ritual purposes. Secondly, jade is one of the spirits from the natural world. This view is based on the principles of *yin* and *yang* in order to illustrate the origins and values of the mysterious material. Thirdly, “jade is seen as an embodiment of higher morality (de), as a symbol of beauty, power, protection and even immortality” (Dematte, 2006, p. 211). An ancient dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* (first century BC) associates the qualities of jade with the ideal gentleman:

Jade, the most beautiful among the stones, embodies five virtues. Its smoothness is warm, which is the virtue of humanity. Its translucence shows the core, which is the virtue of justice. Its sound reverberates and is heard far away, which is the virtue of wisdom. Its hardness can hurt, which is the virtue of courage. Its sharpness and purity do not provoke envy, which is the virtue of honesty. (Shuowen Jiezi - 'Yu', 1930. vol. 5: 112b, cited in Dematte, 2006, p. 211)

Confucius pronounces that there are eleven human virtues related to jade. To support his opinion, “the Book of Verse says: ‘when I think of a wise man, his merits

appear to be like jade” (Shan, 2015, 'Importance of jade in Chinese culture' section, para.4). The fourth view from a Taoism perspective is that jade possesses a supernatural power that can protect human from invasion by the evil influences. In addition, jade was used as “a major medical ingredient to treat diseases, prolong life and promote health...When you keep a piece of jade in your mouth, it can relieve thirst, dispel heat in stomach, nourish internal organs, moisten [the] throat and restore hair” (Shang, 2012, Abstract section). The ancient Chinese also believed jade could help humans to be immortal. According to Shan, to preserve his dead body, “Liu Sheng, the ruler of the Zhongshan State (113 BC) was buried in the jade burial suit composed of 2,498 pieces of jade, sewn together with gold thread” (Shan, 2015, 'Use of Chinese jade', para.3). In Chinese history, ancient jade has had a prominent role in social life, in people’s values and customs, national decrees and regulations in every dynasty, and also in numerous classic works of literature and art. This miraculous material was intertwined with all the developments of Chinese politics, economics and culture. Today, it still contributes to a splendid and colourful society.

7.3.2 Opals, pearls and the Chinese people

I was so impressed with Richard Wang’s antique shop. On this occasion, I found the biggest opal stone I had ever seen in Perth (Figure 4). Richard (N2) told me the rough stone was from Eastern Australia and on consignment for a local Chinese professional collector. On the surface of the brilliant stone, a local painter had illustrated a typical Australian landscapes in harmony with the natural lines and colours of the opal. It displayed a great artistic attraction through the combinations of the precious natural opal and the vivid Australian paintings. This overlay also represented, for Richard and other participants in my research, the experience of adapting to a new environment, not merely through a sensory response to natural materials, but also through cultural experiences related to the natural world.



Figure 5: A painting of an Australian landscape on an opal in Richard's shop (photographed by Li Chen, January 18, 2015)

To Chinese consumers, the most famous Australian gemstone is undoubtedly the opal. It is both an Australian cultural icon and a heritage stone. In the Middle Ages, the opal was believed to bring good fortune as it was seen to possess all the virtues of the colours represented in the colour spectrum (Ferne, 1907, pp. 248-249). This idea of the opal is very similar to the Chinese views on jade.

In Australian Aboriginal stories, a rainbow created this precious stone and the indigenous people regard it as “the fire of the desert” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014, para.1). On 27 July 1993, “Governor-General Bill Hayden proclaimed the opal the national gemstone” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014, para.1). Now, Australia provides more than 95 per cent of the world's supplies of opal of the highest qualities (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014, para.8). Compared to the opals from other parts of the world, associated with volcanic rock and of a higher water content, Australian opal is renowned for its stability and brilliance (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014).

In Western Australia, with gold fever in the twentieth century, there was “a boost of search for precious stones”, such as diamond, ruby, sapphire, emerald, or opal (Guj, 1994, p. 1). Small quantities of emerald have been mined since 1912 and in the late 1970s diamond was discovered in the Kimberley district (Guj, 1994, p. 1).

Rather than the gem-quality stones, abundant semiprecious stones, “particularly those composed of silica in both amorphous (opaline) and cryptocrystalline forms”, are widespread in this land (Guj, 1994, p. 1). According to DOME records, “production of precious opal in Western Australia has been limited to one year only”: the stone “was 4.323 kg, produced in 1974 from a locality 13 km east of Cowarna Station Homestead”, with a value of \$16,994 (Guj, 1994, p. 14). However, varieties of common opal are found widely in about 78 localities in WA. Guj states that “there are many varieties with colouration and patterning that are capable of being cut and polished to yield jewellery stones considerable appeal” (Guj, 1994, p. 14).

According to the Western Australian Branch of the Gemmological Association of Australia, there are a considerable number of jewellery shops dealing in rough stones and skillful cutting in the Perth metropolitan area. In a number of the larger country towns, rock shops sell “specimen material collected from surrounding districts” (Guj, 1994, p. 1). In the 1950s, creating baroque ‘jewels’ by “tumble polishing of coloured siliceous rocks” was a “popular local practice” (Guj, 1994, p. 1). Now, more attractive and valuable jewels appear with sophisticated shaping and polishing. With the growing of the opal trade to China, more Chinese consumers accept precious opal when they have obtained more knowledge of opal from travel agencies or international jewellery exhibitions held in China. Besides, local Chinese jewellers have contributed to the increasing interest of Chinese market. In addition to the economic value of opal due to its limited distribution in the world, Chinese interest has turned to its artistic and cultural values.

Additionally, local jewellers and lapidaries have also started to learn the traditional interests of Chinese clients. The *Epoch Times*, a local Chinese community newspaper (09/05/2015), reported on a famous lapidary, Doris Brinkhaus, who has run a business for over thirty years in Perth, and indicates that modern lifestyle is more casual and relaxed, which is reflected in the design of jewellery. As she attends the jewellery exhibitions in Hong Kong every year, she understands the hobbies of Chinese consumers and their cultural background. In her opinion, Chinese people are fastidious when they choose a jewel. Different from most Western people, Chinese people do not wear jewellery when they are cleaning the backyards or at sports. They also preserve jewellery very carefully. Furthermore, they usually purchase different

types of jewels, particularly the ones with lighter textures, for varied occasions (Guan, 2015, p. B1).



Figure 6: Jade, pearl and opal in Richard's antique shop (photographed by Li Chen, January 18, 2015)

Richard showed me a special jade brooch (Figure 5). It is about five centimetres long and four centimetres wide. The green jade is translucent. The pearls are not very big, but have a perfect round shape and a smooth surface.

This is a high-quality ancient Chinese jade, with the edges gold-plated by hand, and the pearls are from Australia, verified. The brooch is quite rare and very collectable. But I regret that I cannot find out who created it. (N2, R. Wang, personal communication, January 18, 2015)

There is a long history of the relationship between Chinese culture and pearls. The dragon, an ancient totem, always holds pearls in Chinese art works. In Chinese mythology, pearls are purported to be the tears of mermaids from the deep seas (Liao et al., 2002, p. 54). China was not only one of the earliest countries to discover, harvest and exploit pearls but also the earliest country to culture pearls (Liao et al.,

2002, pp. 48-49). Since about six thousand years ago, the pearl has been extensively used for the purposes of religion, adornment, cosmetics and medicine.

In WA, the Aborigines were the first pearlers. Rolls notes that “for thousands of years, even before the Chinese traded for them at Timor, they traded the big gold-lipped shells, iridescent with deep mother-of-pearl, as pendants with inland tribes who knew the sea only as a fable” (Rolls, 1996, p. 99). According to Rolls, in 1861, James Turner collected 910 pearl shells in Nickol Bay, WA, and gathered 150 pearls, “an extraordinary percentage” (Rolls, 1996, p. 99). Then he started a business and employed the Aboriginal women, who were “superb divers” (Rolls, 1996, p. 99), to seek pearls for him, especially the expensive mother-of-pearls. In 1883, the town of Broome, adjacent to the pearling coast, was declared, where there was already crowded with “Polynesians, Maoris, Japanese, Chinese tradesmen and storekeepers, Malays, Europeans and Aborigines” (Rolls, 1996, p. 100).

The pearls were used for “making buttons, combs, handles for knives and brushes, cheap jewellery” (Rolls, 1996, p. 99). Since the nineteenth century, with the booming local Chinese fishing industry, Chinese people acted as both suppliers and buyers of Western Australia’s pearls. After World War II the local pearling industry invested in growing cultured pearls and Japanese almost controlled the market (Rolls, 1996, pp. 99-100). Today, most pearls are grown commercially through “seeding” which means “surgically inserting a bead into the oysters gonad” (Fisheries Western Australia, 2016, para.7).

WA’s pearling industry “worth about \$67 million in 2014, is the second most valuable fishing industry to the State after rock lobster” (Fisheries Western Australia, 2016, para.2). In cultivating, WA has “the only significant wild stock pearl oyster fishery in the world” (Fisheries Western Australia, 2016, para.9). More Chinese local merchants have become involved in Australian jewellery industry. They are seeking cooperative opportunities with local crews as they have found the potential opportunities in the industry in Australia. In addition to the exports to China, Chinese consumers have been introduced to local pearls with more Chinese visitors to WA. Broome, the town “built on the world’s insatiable desire for pearls and pearl shell,” has become famous for its breathtaking natural sceneries and the complex heritage (“Jewels of the Kimberley,” 2015, para.2). Pearl farm tours in Monkey Mia, Shark Bay in WA, also attract many Chinese people to learn about the whole process of

seeding, cultivating and harvesting the pearls (Blue Lagoon Company, 2015, 'Pearl farm' section). During these journeys, people capture the spectacular coastal views as well as seeking the abundant marine creatures such as sharks and turtles.

Furthermore, developments in processing technologies have improved the size and quality of the raw materials for the global jewellery market. Since 2010, polished solid opals from Victoria have been implanted in the Pteria penguin shellfish in a pearl farm in Monkey Mia in order to “create a spectacular new gemstone surrounded by pearl” ("Amazing polished gemstone," 2010, para.1). The in-pearl jewels are harvested after twelve months with an individual retail price from \$AUS 2,000 to \$AUS 20,000, depending on size. Chinese jewellers have also realized the importance of innovation in materials and crafts for the traditional jewellery industry. They are not content with only imported Australian jewel products. Rather, in a cooperation between designers in two countries, Chinese lapidaries have introduced traditional Chinese jewels into Australia while they create new jewels with Australian rough gemstones, like the jewels I have seen in Richard's shop (Figure 3).

7.4. Wine

Before I came to Australia, I had never tasted Australian wine. The first time I tried grape wine was in China in the 1990s, when Western ideas and lifestyles represented fashion and modernity. That wine was the famous Chinese brand 'Changcheng' (The Great Wall). The taste was sour and pungent, disappointing my expectation of the attractive semi-transparent red colour. The other people drinking with me told me that unlike the high alcohol content in Chinese rice wines, grape wine is healthy, especially to women with its benefits to the blood circulation. Since then, grape wine to me invokes a medicinal concept rather than a social drink. Many years later, living in Perth, when I was thinking of some Christmas gifts to give to my local friends, I consulted some local Chinese wine tradesmen, who joined my study as participants. Through visits to their companies, I realized that wine is not merely a bottle of beverage on the shelf in the bottleshop. Inside it, there are plenty of historical and cultural characteristics. In addition, wine is not encapsulated within a single culture but is also intertwined with the perceptual experiences of varied cultural

groups. This provokes me to consider how local wine exemplifies the local natural product's role in transforming people's social perceptions through their material experiences in a diasporic setting such as Western Australia.

7.4.1 Chinese drinking culture

[T]hat was equal to the finest malt whisky. It is made in a 300 year-old distillery and aged in ceramic jars. It is crystal clear, sixty percent proof and it is served in 7 millilitre porcelain glasses that hold exactly a thimbleful. Even then one drinks it in several sips. As soon as a glass is empty, the waiter fills it again. (Rolls, 1992, p. 438)

This is Rolls' experience of drinking sorghum spirit in Beijing, China in the last century. Apart from tea, Chinese spirits, wines and beers go well with Chinese meals. Interestingly, Rolls mentions that at the Chinese banquet, they also drank beer when they were thirsty. The Chinese red wine was served "in small 20 millilitre glasses filled about two-thirds full, slightly sweet, slightly spiced, high in alcohol but delicious" (Rolls, 1992, p. 438). He describes a grape wine "matured for more than ten years with a dozen or so herbs including saffron, crocus, cardamom and cassia... a brownish red, something the colour of an Australian red exposed too long to the light on a country pub shelf" (Rolls, 1992, p. 438).

For most Chinese consumers, there are only four types of alcoholic drinks: red wine (hong jiu), beer (pi jiu), Chinese spirits (bai jiu) and foreign spirits (yang jiu). This nomenclature illustrates that from the Chinese perspective, "red wine represents the entire category" (Liu & Murphy, 2007, p. 102). In some texts, the term "wine" refers to all the relatively alcoholic Chinese beverages. Chinese spirits are distilled from grains of "malted rice, glutinous rice, wheat, maize and sorghum" (Liu & Murphy, 2007, p. 100) and "classed as samshoo, 烧酒, shao jiu, 'spirits that burn'" (Rolls, 1992, p. 438). The earliest beer-type alcoholic drink in China, lao li, may have appeared during 7000 BC brewed with rice "with an alcohol level of 4 to 5 percent" (McGovern, 2009, p. 39). In China, grape wines occurred at the beginning of the Han Dynasty (around 206 BC) with the birth of viticulture in northeast China (Liu & Murphy, 2007, p. 99).

Jiang argues that wine culture is “a culture between material and spirit. It takes the material as carrier and it contains profound spirit in material life” (Jiang, 2011, p. 251). It has been proved that China was one of the earliest countries to brew ferment in the ages of Three Sovereigns (about six or seven thousand years ago). In the ancient books, it says that drinking wines “was prevalent since the Shang Dynasty” (from about the 18th to the 12th century BC). Du Kang is believed to have been the inventor of Chinese earliest wine. Cao Cao, a historical military scientist and writer, also a well-known statesman in the last years of the Eastern Han Dynasty, wrote the classic poem: “what is it that can disperse worries? It’s ‘Du Kang Wine’” (Gong, 1993, p. 58).

Chinese wine was widely used in religion rituals and hospitalities. In *The Book of Songs* (601 BC), the first collection of Chinese poetry, it is said that “I have the excellent wine to treat my special guest” (Gong, 1993, p. 59). Du (2012, pp. 118-120) concludes that there are three main functions of Chinese wine culture. The first is its function in religion. This function is proved by many archeological findings of bronze or pottery vessels at sites of Erlitou and Longshan culture. The scholars believe that the vessels, which contained the brews, were used at feasts for the ancestors or during ritual sacrifices to the gods (McGovern, 2009, p. 56). Another interesting example is the Chinese character “福” (blessing or good fortune) carrying religious meanings from the Xia and the Shang dynasty. Du asserts that the original meaning of the Chinese character was “to offer a jar of wine respectfully in front of gods in prayer” (Du, 2012, p. 119).

The second notable function of ancient Chinese wine is its relation to Chinese traditional literature and arts. According to Du, ancient literati “were steeped in literary books and had many taboos on etiquette. Wine could liberate literati from the shackles of federal ritual customs transitorily” (Du, 2012, p. 119). The typical literati of the Tang Dynasty were Li Bai (701 A.D. – 762 A.D.), Du Fu (712 A.D. – 770 A.D.) and Bai Juyi (772 A.D. – 846 A.D.). In all the 1,400 poems left by Du Fu, “300 of which were related to wine. Li Bai left 1050 poems and 170 poems were related to wine. Bai Juyi left more than 3000 poems, and those related to wine add up to more than 900” (Du, 2012, p. 120). The wine related to elegant culture, in Du’s view, enabled the literati to become brave enough to “express their disappointment at political affairs” (Du, 2012, p. 120). Wine and Chinese elegant culture reinforced each

other. Wine fructified artistic creation while the classic “instruments, poems and articles, paintings, calligraphic works”, which have been passed down from several thousand years ago, “became the fantastic packaging materials of wine” (Du, 2012, pp. 119-120).

The third function of Chinese ancient wine is entertainment, with an emphasis on, “drinking vessels, drinking customs, and drinking games” (Du, 2012, p. 120). Traditionally, different drinking vessels represented the differences between drinkers’ occupations or social statuses. Composing drinking-game verses was unique to Chinese wine culture, a practice common among literati and designed to show the drinkers’ talents at writing poems and literatures (Du, 2012, p. 120). Other popular drinking games were “dice-tossing, lot-drawing, finger-guessing, number-guessing etc.” all of which aimed “liven up the atmosphere at the feast” (Du, 2012, p. 120). In contemporary Chinese society, “drinking games embody hospitality” (Du, 2012, p. 120).

Finally, Chinese ancient wine has a close connection with medicine. Since the invention of fermentation, “wine was ranked first of all drugs” (Xia, 2013, p. 549). During the practices of traditional Chinese medicine, Chinese people learned that “wine can promote blood flow, invigorate the spleen, favour the stomach and intestine, moisten skin, dispel cold and dampness, and so on” (Xia, 2013, p. 550). People in the Shang and Zhou Dynasty used wine as “a solvent not only for extracting the pharmacologically active ingredients from drugs but also for keeping these ingredients active longer” (Xia, 2013, p. 549). Most wines are made of broomcorn, millet or fruit, but “only rice wine can make medicinal wine” (Xia, 2013, p. 549). Chinese medicinal wines are used both orally and externally. Historically, Chinese doctors have applied medicinal wines to numerous fields such as internal medication, surgery, or “prolonging life, combating fatigue, enhancing sexual function” and “ameliorating osteoporosis” (Xia, 2013, p. 550). In modern China, in addition to maintaining the traditional methods, Chinese medicinal wines have gradually assimilated the developing science and technologies to “standardize their manufacture and enhance their quality control” (Xia, 2013, p. 554).

7.4.2 WA's wines and Chinese sales agents

The diners, in very formal suits, are sitting in a luxury restaurant. The waiter, standing beside the dining table, with a white towel hanging in his arm, uncorked a bottle of red wine. This is the classic method of drinking wine to Chinese people. In their knowing, firstly, wine is red; secondly, the bottle is sealed with an oak cork, not screw topped; the last, wines from France are the best. Who gave us the knowledge? They are from the Hollywood movies and the [Western] TV programs. Actually it is a challenge for us to sell Australian wines to China. Australian wines are screw topped and many famous ones are white. (W2, M. Sun, personal communication, March 15, 2015)

When I interviewed the staff of a big local wine trading company, I was surprised to find the Chinese sales persons fascinated by Western wine culture and proud of introducing drinking culture to Chinese consumers. Max Sun and Tony Huang have worked in this industry for nearly ten years. They have abundant knowledge of Australian wines and WA's wineries, both local and Chinese markets, and the Chinese consumers. In their office, there was not too much wine stock but they displayed some popular varieties from the local famous wineries. This was the start of my journey to learn about WA's wines and their important role as material agents in the diasporic process.

Vines appeared in Australia was in 1788 within the cargo on the first fleet arriving in the new settlement of Sydney. The initial purpose of growing grapes was to provide more fresh fruit for the increasing population of the new colony. "By 1850, vineyards for wine production were established in most Australian states" (Iland & Gago, 2002, p. 16). In Western Australia, the first vineyard, "Olive Farm", was started around 1830 by an Englishman Thomas Waters. It was sold to the Yurisich family in 1933 and it is still operated by the family today. Yugoslav immigrants established a large extent of wine industry in the Swan Valley, about 40 kilometres northeast to Perth (Iland & Gago, 2002, p. 16). In WA, there are "nine separate sub-regions – Margaret River, the Great Southern, the Swan Valley, Geographe, Peel, Manjimup, Pemberton, Blackwood and the Perth Hills – with each making distinctive wines that show the influence of the region and climate on the styles of wines being made" (Jordan & Fan, 2014, p. 1). Although the wines from WA comprise less than 10 per cent of all Australian production, around 20 per cent of Australian premium wines are

made in WA wineries (Jordan & Fan, 2014, p. 1). According to the participants, quantity of products is the main reason why Western Australia's wine exportation to China is not as successful as that in other states such as South Australia. WA's winemakers focus on "producing high quality wines on a smaller scale than some of the bigger volumes being made in other states" (Jordan & Fan, 2014, p. 1). Tony (W3), another participant from the company, gave me a lucid explanation of his tasting experiences:

The wines from the other states are excellent but I cannot tell the difference between the labels. It is like going to a strange place, feeling everyone is friendly but having no impression on the individuals. Instead, every WA's wine has distinctive features like a characteristic person in a group: one is warm-hearted, another is reserved, the third is elegant, and the fourth is heroic. They are personal, easily remembered. (W3, T. Huang, personal communication, March 15, 2015)

The narrations of Max and Tony present their sensory experiences while learning about Western wine cultures. Max's view involves Chinese social memory of the Western elite lifestyle, represented by grape wine, in the late 1980s when China promulgated the policies of reform and opening to the outside world. Western ideas constitute a massive perception of modern consumer cultures as public memory due to Chinese citizens' exposure to foreign TV plays and movies. Grape wine is a perfect example, demonstrating that collective memory is embodied in the object, which is associated with "the pre-set cultural limits of specific conditions of production and overtly prescribed modes of consumption" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 11). As wine is a universal product and also a tradition beverage in China, the translocation of people's sensory perception resides not only in the wines themselves but also in the material networks of drinking culture.

Compared to Max's memory of the Chinese stereotype of Western wine, Tony's metaphorical response, cited earlier, employs a personal material experience of watching, smelling and tasting to explain wine. I appreciate Jordan's metaphor for wine tasting: "a bit like sport – the more you practice, the better you get" (Jordan & Fan, 2011, p. 18). No one will doubt that wine tasting is a combined sensory experience. Before drinking, pour "a reasonable amount" (Jordan & Fan, 2011, p. 19) of the wine into the good shaped glass, which can focus the aromas. Check the colour

to see if the wine is fresh and brilliant. Aroma is important as it speaks of wine's qualitative secrets "with the first sniff" (Jordan & Fan, 2011, p. 19). Then take a small amount in mouth.

Let it roll across the tongue to allow you to get a better understanding of its characteristics. Here you will really pick the various sensations – whether it's sweet, bitter or sour for instance, whether it is oaked, what type of oak perhaps, the tannins, the acid and the overall texture. (Jordan & Fan, 2011, p. 20)

The sense of taste in the process is building "a palate memory" (Jordan & Fan, 2011, p. 20). To identify the wines, Tony applies all the sensory memories to his knowledge of wine. Further, Tony's material experience is also connected the senses and emotions, mind and body, as the wines are endowed with human characteristics via his perceptual and emotional experience. It is obvious that Tony has constructed a deep emotional connection to WA's wines throughout his sensory engagements in the experience. He notes that WA's winemakers adhere to their own styles and they do not produce a taste to cater to the market. "I respect this principle. The wine is not commercialised as it is in some other states, but its value is acknowledged gradually" (W3, T. Huang, personal communication, March 15, 2015).

In terms of the worldwide market, grape wine is "one of the most valuable agriculture products traded internationally with market of 22 billion U.S. dollars in 2011" while its steady expansion over the past decade is due to the growth of the Asian market, "particularly China, Japan, India, Singapore, and South Korea" (Qing, Xi, & Hu, p. 602). Grape wine began to be known by common Chinese people in the 1980s; after twenty years, it became "one of the most popular beverages for special occasions, as well as everyday consumption" (Y. Yang & Paladino, 2015, p. 336). In China, grape wine, especially red wine, "is widely regarded as an 'image product', conveying an upper-class status and admiration toward a Western lifestyle" (Y. Yang & Paladino, 2015, p. 339). It reflects not only "a healthier and 'trendier' lifestyle" for less alcohol, but also creates "an image of affluence" associated with its Western origins (Y. Yang & Paladino, 2015, p. 336). Yang and Paladino argue that in China, "consumption of grape wine is perceived to demonstrate improved economic conditions and symbolizes a prestigious social status due to its association with

Western lifestyles, luxuriousness, and success.” (Y. Yang & Paladino, 2015, p. 336). However, around 90 per cent of wine consumed in China is red because in Chinese culture, red is a lucky colour, connected to happiness, prosperity, and good fortune such as celebrations for New Year or weddings (Muhammad, Leister, McPhail, & Chen, 2014, p. 398). By contrast, the colour white has a negative connotation and is associated with funerals (this factor is related to Feng Shui guidelines referred to in Chapter 6). Some research also indicates that Chinese people prefer red wine to white also because of red wine’s stronger taste (Liu & Murphy, 2007, p. 102).

Although there is a long history of drinking grape wines in China, much of the literature (Jiang, 2011; Liu & Murphy, 2007; Muhammad et al., 2014; Qing et al.; Williamson, J. Robichaud, & I.L. Francis, 2012) mentions that Chinese people’s knowledge of wine is limited. The top four affecting factors in their purchasing are “quality, country of origin, brand and price” (Muhammad et al., 2014, p. 394). The image of French wine represents the highest quality; thus, “France accounts for about 45 per cent of the Chinese wine imports” (Muhammad et al., 2014, p. 396). Despite Australian wines’ international reputation, “Chinese people probably know that Australian lobsters are good but they know very little about Australian wine” (Liu & Murphy, 2007, p. 108). In the contemporary Australian wine industry, “China is the number one destination for Australian bottled wine exports in Asia and is the third largest market for Australian global bottled wine exports by value” (Wine Australia 2012, cited in Williamson et al., 2012, p. 257). To simplify Chinese consumers’ purchasing process, local merchandisers highlight origin information as the basis of decision, particularly for the naïve wine buyers (Hu, Li, Xie, & Zhou, 2008, p. 297). One participant, Lin (W1), an experienced wine trader, told me his successful sales strategy:

To tell the quality actually is very easy...I go to local bottle shops and find out which ones are popular, then I buy those ones. Many [Chinese] customers ask me whether I know wines. I reply ‘yes’. I tell them to select the local best-selling ones. I trust local market, as well as local prestige products. (W1, L. Q. Fan, personal communication, March 15, 2015)

Lin noted that while selling wines to Chinese customers, especially local Chinese people, he introduces them to the local lifestyle, helping them enjoy the local

environment through winery tours. In his understanding, wine is an essential part of Western lifestyle. Behind every wine, there are people, stories, and cultures. Tony (W3, T. Huang, personal communication, March 15, 2015) asserted that they do not suggest that customers purchase expensive wines. Rather, they hope buyers arrive at their own decisions after learning through the personal experiences. I joined several Chinese wine-tasting groups. Representatives from the wineries were invited to introduce their products. Local Chinese people from varied backgrounds attended the tasting to learn about wine as well as to make friends. They were dressed in formal clothes, with family members or friends. In concession to their level of English literacy, there was a Chinese interpreter, usually from staff in the trading company. During the tasting, people listened to the stories of the wineries, learned to recognise various labels on the bottles, watched the wine colour, smelled the aromas, and tried the different tastes. The entire experiences were enjoyable and educational. The wines became narrative marked by the people's own sensibilities. For them, the wines were both familiar and exotic and entangled with material and social senses.

In both China and Western Australia, wine acts as “an invitation to a journey toward a festival” (Certeau, Giard, & Mayol, 1998, p. 94). “As a social beverage, a major function of wine is to facilitate social interactions as a ‘social lubricant’” (Y. Yang & Paladino, 2015, p. 339). Michel de Certeau (1998) remarks that “wine is a social separator” because people gather together with the same taste. His definition of wine, “the blood of workers, what gives them the strength and courage to accomplish their task” (Certeau et al., 1998, p. 91), differs from the Chinese understanding of red wine as part of a luxury life. Due to limited wine knowledge, Chinese consumers “rely heavily on prices to wine purchasing decisions, as price relates to *mianzi*” (Liu & Murphy, 2007, p. 98). Prices indicate different *mianzi* (social image) while *mianzi* implicates the connection between occasions and prizes. On social occasions with family or close friends, “*mianzi* is less a concern”; on important occasions, “[hosts] would probably purchase an expensive foreign wine [to create] excellent face” (Liu & Murphy, 2007, p. 106). Additionally, in contemporary Chinese social occasions, the drinkers also take varied wines to connote the degrees of social relations. Tony (W3) introduced the regular order of drinking:

on the dining table, they usually take the Chinese spirits first, to show the warmest welcome to the guests. Then they drink healthier grape wines after the strong alcohol. The last drink is always beer for relaxing in an intimate atmosphere (W3, T. Huang, personal communication, March 15, 2015).

In this drinking experience, the tastes of different beverages carry dual functions of both the material of personal sensory practice and a communication tool to construct the drinkers' social relations

In China, people spend more on gift wines than for personal consumption (Qing et al., p. 601). In addition to the influences of *mianzi* in red wine consumption, *guanxi* (interpersonal relationships) is another factor with effects on Chinese gift-giving behaviour. The three goals of Chinese gift-giving behaviour are "to manage one's social status, to maintain or improve relationships, as well as to demonstrate conformity to agreed social norms" (Y. Yang & Paladino, 2015, p. 338). In this behaviour, a gift of expensive grape wine, especially a famous Western brand, is labelled with "high quality and prestigious status" (Y. Yang & Paladino, 2015, p. 339). De Certeau divides wine into two categories: ordinary table wine and "good wine of superior quality". He describes that the ambivalence of wine is "a socializing dynamic." It establishes "the thickness of neighbourhood" and "the contract between factual partners" within "a system of giving and receiving whose signs link together the private space of family life and the public space of the social environment" (Certeau et al., 1998, pp. 96-97). Therefore, in a cultural dimension, the wines on Chinese dining table and expensive gift wines acquire their social meanings through the private space and the public space in which they are consumed.

Regarding diasporic space, there is a growing trend for vineyard touring in local Chinese community. Tours to WA's wine regions, from Perth to the Great Southern, travel across the whole southwest area of Western Australia. The land is "blessed with vastly different soil types and climatic conditions, resulting in distinctive character in many of the wines" (Jordan & Fan, 2011, p. 89). In addition to the local wine varieties of excellent quality, Chinese visitors also appreciate the pristine white beaches, and the appealing countryside views full of native flora and fauna with a fascinating history. Vineyard touring has become a popular route on local Chinese people's weekends or holidays. It provides the opportunity for people to have an embodied experience of learning the landscapes of the state's southwest. The

state forests and the national parks are havens for bushwalking, picnics and weekend exploring. As I discussed in Chapter Five, through the multisensory experiences of walking, touching, vision, smelling and tasting, nature is a space that becomes a place with people's growing recognition of the local material environment. Moreover, people appreciate the local government's attitude toward the ecological protection.

The whole area of Margeret River is a vast coalfield, with immeasurable economic value. Many corporations have tried to exploit it but WA's government determines to reserve it. We should respect the rules of the natural world and maintain a sustainable development of the society. (W2, M. Sun, personal communication, March 15, 2015)

Although the export of WA wines to China continues to increase, WA's wine is still as an unknown jewel for most Chinese consumers. In most of the research on Chinese wine consumption, WA's wine is seldom discussed as a famous product. In my study, I was impressed by the local Chinese people's changing perceptions of grape wine due to the influence of Western drinking culture and their reflections on the local natural environment via their sensory experiences in the understanding and learning of local wines.

7.5 Conclusion

In Richard Wang's living room, there is a coffee table renovated from a classical Chinese dining table of the nineteenth century. Richard feels regretful that the local shop owner did not realize the value of the antique Chinese table before he cut all the legs off to make Western style furniture. However, all his Chinese friends favor the mixed fittings of the special coffee table with two traditional Chinese chairs. I regard this as a symbol of precisely how everyday practice in the diasporic space becomes a site for cultural transformations. Seremetakis raises the question of whether memory is "stored in specific everyday items that form the historicity of a culture, items that create and sustain our relationship to the historical as a sensory dimension" (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 3). This is the starting and ending point of this chapter.

Wood, jewel and wine are all precious natural products from WA and important materials in Chinese culture. The reason why I selected these three materials because they demonstrate the important role of WA's natural world in the development of local Chinese culture, making the history of WA's Chinese diaspora more splendid, colourful and meaningful. The cultures of wood, jade and wine permeate Chinese civilization with both material and spiritual engagements. Chinese traditional philosophies, particularly the Taoist principles, place emphasis on the relationships between the natural world and humanity. Chinese environmental views also concentrate on "an alternative mode of understanding based on the premise of our engagement with the world, rather than our detachment from it" (Ingold, 2000, p. 11). In Taoist parlance, human beings build a conception of the environment through the existence of all substances, which give meaning in relation to people and "continually come[s] into being in the process of our lives" (Ingold, 2000, p. 20).

Through historical and ethnographic analysis of significant natural products, this chapter explored the transformation of local Chinese diasporic cultures in virtue of the embodied engagement with Western Australian place. In their distinct physical environment, WA's wood, gemstones, pearls and wines are totally different from the species involved in traditional Chinese culture. Jarrah, sandalwood, opals, pearls and grape wine: everything is unfamiliar to Chinese people as all these products represent the image of a distant country, Australia. However, they are also favoured in China because the people feel familiar with the same materials from their traditional cultures. This paradox reflects the changes in the people's perception during the long history of diasporic experiences. In the early Chinese immigrant livelihood, natural resources provided them with opportunities to make a living from woodcutting, pearling, mining or working in wineries. Since early settlement, through everyday embodied practices, Chinese diasporic people have observed the new land where they live, understanding their relationships with the natural resources they are working on and thereby transforming the perceptions of the material environment. Contemporary local Chinese people have started to reassess the cultural value of the natural products with a sense of belonging to this land alongside values of conservation, sustainability, and stewardship.

In this chapter, all products discussed are derived from natural resources, such as wood from trees, jewels from gemstones or sea creatures, and wines from grapes.

This point implies three recognitions. Firstly, deriving profit from using natural materials should not be regarded as people ruthlessly exploiting the natural world, but “the environment shar[ing] its bounty with humans” (Ingold, 2000, p. 44). During the manufacturing processes, people are making sense of the new environment. Thus, secondly, human actions, such as working “in the sphere of human relations would be regarded as instances of practical involvement with world come to be seen, in the sphere of relations with the non-human environment, as instances of its metaphorical construction” (Ingold, 2000, p. 45). We must acknowledge the engagement of non-human agencies and entities in the constitution of diasporic perceptions. Thirdly, via the interaction, these sensory entities alter traditional ways of thinking and living. People perceive the concept of the ‘local’ as they feel proud of the products; they began to evolve a mutual concern with a shared new environment through experiential processes to obtain knowledge of their surroundings.

This chapter focuses on the research questions concerned with the perception of nature and self-conception of diasporic engaged with local material world in their daily practices. It explores the diasporic perceptions of the natural world through the transformation of the knowledge of particular materials, which carry both Chinese and Australian cultural heritage. Through these agentic substances, local Chinese people began to reassess the relations between their daily lives and the material world. At the same time, they adjusted their self-conception as a part of diasporic knowing. In order to offer further insights into the research focuses, the following two chapters present two extensive examples of abalone recreational harvesting and Chinese vegetable gardening.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ABALONE HARVESTING

8.1 Introduction

“Currently, in the whole world, no one can find any food more expensive and more valuable than abalone. If there was, I believe the majority of people would like to try” (T. Zhou, 2004, para.29). This is the view of the owner of a famous restaurant in China, interviewed in the article “Abalone: Delicacy, source of wealth and power” in the journal *Chinese National Geography*. The author, Zhou Tong, argues that in contemporary China, Chinese people are always willing to display their wealth and privilege through their diet. Today, this attitude, rooted in tradition, is still practiced in modern society. The abalone, a common marine mollusc, has attracted attention within the cultural perspectives of food. This chapter provides an in-depth case study of the relationship between the local Chinese diaspora and the environment as expressed in the practice of recreational abalone harvesting in Perth. Grounded in abalone’s historical presence and multidimensional symbolism in daily diasporic life, the focus of this chapter is the application of sensory ethnography and food studies to the case study in order to address all the research questions about the diasporic perception of material surroundings, their self-conception and the dynamic relationship between the people and the natural world.

Through study of local abalone harvesting, I explore several points. Firstly, I describe the cultural value in both Chinese and Australian Aboriginal histories. This background is essential to understanding the important role of abalone as a case in the dialogical relation between Chinese diasporic culture and the local material environment. As a part of the research background, an introduction to abalone’s natural distribution, worldwide consumption, and local fishing regulations for its preservation is necessary.

Secondly, the use of sensory ethnography as the methodology of this research is outlined. As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, sensory ethnography in this project involves my own physical and sensory experiences, in addition to the reflections of other participants. The experiences of an insider ethnographer integrate

spatial practices in order to conceive of the local environment in the production of our own sensory landscape. Within this perspective, the application of sensory ethnography focuses on places, traditions, imagination and particular memories embodied in the practices of abalone harvesting.

Finally, the abalone case demonstrates the application of food studies to research on diaspora. In fact, the most important cases in my project – wine, abalone, and Chinese vegetable gardening (Chapter 9) – are all situated in this framework. Since food performs a vital role in human livelihood, it condenses memories of origin, tradition and cultures. During diasporic experiences, food as a typical and basic material element transforms the perception of domestic and transnational spaces while bridging homeland and hostland. In the abalone example, a food study within the practice of ethnography, intertwining memory studies with sensory ethnography and multispecies ethnography, enables me to understand nature's influence on local Chinese diasporic life through the nonhuman agent of the abalone.

Around the topic of abalone as both a delicacy in Chinese culinary culture and a natural resource in Perth's environment, my illustrative film *Baoyu* (abalone) tells a story about local diasporic experiences from an autobiographical perspective. This film discloses common diasporic practices that involve close sensory engagement with the natural world of Perth. It is about the relationships between ecology and the human world, and between the natural world and traditional cultures. Diasporic culture is interdependent with the agency of natural resources such as abalone.

8.2 Cultural background

Many years ago, I watched a television advertisement for 'Ayi abalone' in Hong Kong. With the background of melodious music, an elegant woman stepped out of a luxury car and walked into a sumptuous restaurant. After she gently sat down at the gilded dining table, a formally dressed waiter served up a piece of abalone covered with some golden colored sauce. Then a deep, booming masculine voice rose: 'Ayi abalone, presented nobly'. Consequently, I still remember the name of the most luxurious abalone dish in the Eastern food industry.

Abalone is a historical and cultural phenomenon. It has many names throughout the world. It is called baoyu, fuyu, jiukong, shijueming in China, abalone in America, ormer in England, sea ear or muttonfish in Australia, paua in New Zealand and awabi in Japan (T. Zhou, 2004, 'Species' section, para.1). In China, abalone, swallow's nest, shark's fin and sea cucumber are the four top food sources by their dietary value. Early Native Americans and Australian Aborigines also used abalone in their recipes (Braje, Erlandson, Rick, Dayton, & Hatch, 2009; Cruse, Stewart, & Norman, 2005).

Interestingly, there was a similar period of collaboration on abalone harvesting between early Chinese and European settlers and the indigenous people of both North America and Australia. In California, in the mid-nineteenth century, a few Anglo-Americans worked in abalone fishing, helping the Chinese dry and salt the meat for export to the Far East, and also involving a worldwide trade in the polished abalone shells for the clothing and jewellery industries (Oliver, 2013, p. 2). In New South Wales, Australia, with the arrival of large numbers of Chinese gold miners after 1855, "Chinese entrepreneurs set up fishing and fish drying operations in the 1860s just north of Sydney to supply the goldfields. Aboriginal people were employed to collect mutton fish for these traders" with "their traditional diving skills and their extended family labour" (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 29). It is also recorded at the time that a Chinese entrepreneur, Ah Chouney, "owned up to twenty boats, employing mainly European crews" (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 29). Afterwards, some Aboriginal employees who had learned the skills to dry and preserve fresh abalone from their Chinese workmates started their own family manufacture to trade with Chinese (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 31). In the case of abalone, it becomes obvious that diverse cultures – from China, Australian, and Europe, which had introduced ideas of modernization to China – have been closely involved with everyday practices related to the vital materiality of nonhuman nature.

8.2.1 Abalone in Chinese culture

Abalone, usually named Baoyu in Chinese, is mentioned in Chinese literature two thousand years ago as an expensive delicacy for the nobility (Bangu, AD80 /

1962, 'Wang Mang' section, vol.69). Inheriting the thinking of the ancestors, Chinese people believe that abalone meat provides abundant nutrition while abalone juice has been claimed in the oldest medicine textbooks to be an effective treatment for some blood diseases (Ye & Wu, 2006, p. 6). Chinese medicine categorises the four premium delicacies by their shapes: sea cucumber and shark fin symbolize the male, strengthening yang, while abalone and swallow's nest are the emblem of the female and have the function of nourishing yin (T. Zhou, 2004, para.8). According to traditional Chinese medicine, abalone can warm the kidney, invigorate yin, moisturize the lung, clear inner heat, and nourish the liver to improve visual acuity; thus it is also called "mingmu fish" (improving eyesight) in China (Yu, 2015, p. 49). However, the nutritional value of abalone is still controversial in modern Chinese medicine. Nutritionists such as professor Ma Guansheng from the Chinese National Institute for Nutrition and Health, using Western scientific research methods, found that abalone does not surpass the nutritional value of other common foods. Other scholars, such as Professor Maksim from the Ocean University of China, claim that there still exists an elusive connection between abalone and human health from the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine (T. Zhou, 2004, para.10).

Despite the controversy over its nutritional value, nobody can deny that since 4000 years ago in ancient Chinese, abalone has ranked as the top seafood (Yu, 2015, p. 48). In the ancient historic book *Hanshu* (in AD 80), it is recorded that the emperor Wang Mang in the late Western Han Dynasty was addicted to abalone dishes (Bangu, AD80 / 1962). In the Eastern Han Dynasty, the famous politician, militarist and litterateur Cao Cao was also known to enjoy abalone dishes (Li, Li, & Xu, AD 983 / 1960, vol.938). In the Qing Dynasty (1616-1912), there were abalone banquets in the imperial palace. And other adjacent seaside countries gave abalone as precious gifts to the Qing emperors every year (XinhuaNet, 2005, para.1). In the early sixth century, the tradition of eating abalone spread to Japan and Korea, after which the Eastern Asian people transmitted this culinary culture to the whole world (T. Zhou, 2004, para.7).

There are over seventy species of abalone known in the world and eight of them are found in Chinese marine areas, in which three species *Haliotis assimilis*, *Haliotis roei*, and *Haliotis diversicolor* have the top three economic value in the market, whereas the other five species are disappearing quickly (Ke, 2013, p. 27). The

practice of abalone farming in China began in the late 1960s. The industry has grown extensively in the last two decades. In 2010, China accounted for 86 per cent of all production of abalone in the world (Ke, 2013, p. 27), even though, in China, only a small percentage of the Chinese population is able to afford this expensive and delicious mollusc (T. Zhou, 2004, para.3). In Chinese history and culture, the esteemed dishes involving abalone symbolize a respectable social, economic and political status.

8.2.2 Abalone for Aboriginal peoples

For centuries, abalone has been widely used by Indigenous people living by the seas, mainly in Australia, New Zealand, East Asia, and North America, as an important food resource. For Aboriginal people, abalone is a subsistence food as it is easy to harvest, “extremely rich in energy and accessible for as long as the beaches are freely open to all” (Cruse et al., 2005, p. xi). Certain Australian Aboriginal cultures have a strong attachment to the coastal environment. In the book *Mutton Fish*, the authors point out how the name of abalone changed with the process of communication between the south coast Aboriginal people and modern society since the nineteenth century. In 1844, George Augustus Robinson recorded that abalone was called walkun by the Nullica people of Twofold Bay. This period in Australian history was “the pre-contact story of the Aboriginal use of shellfish resources” (Cruse et al., 2005, p. xii). The second period in this book is presented as the “mutton fish” period, covering a phase from the earliest contact between the Aboriginal people and the European arrivals from the eighteenth century to the 1960s (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 15). There are two opinions on the origins of the name ‘mutton fish’. One states it is from the early European explorers and settlers, as the abalone smell and taste are similar to mutton. They also called it ‘ear shell’ from its ear-like shape. Another view regards the name as originating from the Aboriginal tribe Kooris because it reminded the people of the mutton provided to them when they worked on farms. Today, Kooris still call the mollusk ‘mutton fish’. Since the 1960s, the name ‘abalone’ from the Spanish American tradition has become popular, and there is a large-scale abalone

fishery for commercial purposes with a worldwide demand for the product (Cruse et al., 2005, pp. xi-xii).

In the south coast of New South Wales, the oldest archaeological find of walkun shells in a midden may be traced back to about 3700 years ago (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 8). Far beyond its value as a food resource, abalone is an important material in both Chinese and Australian Aboriginal cultures and histories. In China, for centuries, despite the abundant distribution of abalone along Chinese coastlines, due to its slow growth cycle and overfishing for years, abalone has been a scarce resource only accessed by the privileged class. Unlike the role as signifier of status in Chinese culture, abalone was collected by the Australian Aboriginals because:

walkun gives a high rate of meat to shell weight, so it is an efficient source of food. It is available in all seasons and has been dived for in most weather conditions because the complex shapes of the bays and inlets on the south coast provided shelter, whatever the wind direction. In extreme low tide walkun could easily be picked off the weed beds and from under rocks. This would have provided a reliable food source for children fossicking on the beach while the adults hunted or fished nearby. (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 8)

However, abalone has also extensively been involved in the developments of Aboriginal society. For the modern Aboriginal people, the culture of 'walkun' inscribes their early history and their heritage of coastal livelihood. It presents their everyday experiences of "fishing, processing and the practice of sharing amongst the members of the group" (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 10). 'Mutton fish' records the modern times of the Aboriginal communities with the development of the colony's industries and agricultures. "Fishing and shellfish gathering continued to be an important part of the south coast livelihood well into the twentieth century" (Cruse et al., 2005, pp. 27-28). 'Abalone' represents the changes in the coastal people's lives since "government policies and commercial pressures have taken their toll in the traditional ways of life" (Cruse et al., 2005, p. 91).

In Western Australia, the Nyoongar people also use abalone as a food source from the sea. "The Nyoongar people live in the South West of Western Australia, from just south of Geraldton (North) to Merridan (East) to Esperance (South)" ("The Wadjuk: Guardians of the link between land and sea," n.d., para.2). Dr Noel Nannup,

a well-respected Nyoongar Elder and a Heritage Consultant with Indigenous Tours WA, once informed me that WA Aboriginal people's traditional coastal lives, abalone also supplemented other food sources since their main diet was fish and plenty of bush tucker (food gathered from the wild) (N. Nannup, personal communication, June 15, 2016). In Kallbarri National Park, which is one of the best known parks in WA with its "scenic gorges through red and white banded sandstone and its soaring coastal cliffs" (Department of Parks and Wildlife Western Australia, 2013, para.1), it is easy to find big abalone shells, the size of a sauce pan, in the midden of early indigenous people. Dr Nannup explained that the people also made tools such as water containers with big seashells or pretty jewels with the small ones, which might include abalone shells. However, today it is impossible to harvest such big sized abalones close to the coast as the wild abalone stock is reducing so quickly. Modern Aboriginal lives have gradually joined in contemporary industrialized society. For instance, in the local fishing industry, mainly located in the Shark Bay, 800 km north to Perth, there are indigenous people working in the fishery (N. Nannup, personal communication, June 15, 2016). South-west WA's indigenous people, the Nyoongar people, call themselves "the guardians of the link between land and sea", and are deeply rooted in the country and waterway they care for as well as all the natural resources they can obtain from the natural world.

8.3. Natural resources, worldwide consumption and local fishing regulations

According to Field, "the earliest fossilized abalone shells have been found in sediments approximately 100 million years old" (Field, 2008, p. 2). There are seventy known abalone species in the worldwide maritime zones (Cruse et al., 2005, p. xi). Amongst all the oceans, the mass distribution of the species is along the coastlines of the Pacific Ocean and the surrounding islands. The distribution on coastal areas of the Indian Ocean takes second place while a smaller distribution occurs in the Atlantic Ocean and none is found in the Arctic Ocean (Ocean biogeographic information system, 2014). In spite of the large distribution of various species around the world, only twenty species of abalone, mainly in the northwest, northeast and southwest of

the Pacific Ocean and the south of Africa, can be fished on an industrial scale. A few people regard abalone as some kind of mussel or clam in the subclass Bivalvia. It actually belongs to the subclass Presabanchia and the family Haliotidae in marine biology (T. Zhou, 2004, 'Species' section, para.3).

Abalone has a very slow growth rate. It usually takes about four years or more to grow from a germ cell to the mature size (Q. Yang, 2006, p. 34). Take one Chinese abalone *Haliotis assimilis* as an example. According to J. C. Zhang (2004, 'Growth' section, para.3), it takes three years to grow to the size of seven centimeters. The growth rate declines as the abalone ages, as the weight and length of young ones always increase faster than the mature ones. Since the growth habit of abalone shell is forward while its thinner right side grows faster than the thick, involute left side, generally the growth trail of the shell rotates to the left. The growth trail, which is similar to tree rings, helps to estimate the age of an abalone and its living conditions. The living environment, seasons and the foods it takes are all evident in the patterns and colors of its shell (J. Zhang, 2004, 'Growth' section, para.1). The protective coloration of abalone shells differ from the kind of reefs they live on and the seaweeds they eat. However, the species of abalone have relatively fixed colors. The wild ones are typically reddish-brown or brown tinged with green, while the artificially fed abalones are green or wine-colored (J. Zhang, 2004, 'Colours' section, para.1). Experienced people can distinguish wild abalone from cultured ones according to the colors of the helix on the shells' top. Although the two kinds of abalones are not different in nutritional content, on market, the price of wild abalones is 30-40 percent higher than that of farmed ones (J. Zhang, 2004, 'Colours' section, para.3).

Since 1987, abalone has been successfully cultured in Dalian, China, “with most research focused on the development of hatchery seed production techniques and grow-out modes” (G. Zhang, Que, Liu, & Xu, 2004, Introduction section, para.2). The total production from the Chinese farms increased “from 19956 metric tons in 2006 to 42373 metric tons in 2009, with 28.6% increase annually” (Mai & Zhou, 2010, para.1). Even with the large amount of imported abalone and the smuggled ones, the total annual amount of abalone consumption in China provides less than 10 grams to each Chinese (T. Zhou, 2004, para.3). Professor Maksim explains that the Americans did not use abalone in their recipes before but now the immigrants from

China and Japan have boosted its price on the North American market. Now, the entire world is consuming abalone (T. Zhou, 2004, para.4). In Hong Kong, dried abalone with first-class quality can be sold at 30,000 Hong Kong dollars (approximately 5000 AU dollars) for 500 grams. It is said that “one bite of abalone is equal to one bite of gold” (T. Zhou, 2004, para.2). In Japan, in the first century, a few women lived on abalone harvesting. In the sixth century, owing to years of the recruitment of men for overseas wars, the tradition of harvesting abalones by women began, and is still passed from generation to generation. In the early 20th century, dried abalone export has accounted for 80 percent of Japanese marine exportation (T. Zhou, 2004, para.13). In Korea, which plays an important on the world market, estimated production has increased by “more than 60 times” over the past nine years (Cook & Gordon, 2010, p. 570). In China, large-scale abalone farms are scattered along the 18,000 kilometers coastline. In China, more than 300 abalone farms are on the coastline, “with the largest individual farm producing more than 1,000 mt/y” (Cook & Gordon, 2010, p. 569). The land-based majority is in the southern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong while “much of the seed production is near Dalian in the northern province of Liaoning” (Cook & Gordon, 2010, pp. 569-570). Every spring, abalone farmers buy abalone juveniles from the suppliers and raise them in enclosed reef rocks along the coast. After 18 months, the abalone can grow to 8-9 cm and the selling price at Dalian’s market is about 185 CNY (approximately 37 AUD) for 500 grams: in local luxury restaurants, the price of the same abalone can be 750 CNY (150 AUD) for 500 grams (T. Zhou, 2004, para.26). On Chinese market, larger sized abalone can be sold at higher prices. “For example, *Haliotis laevis* [greenlip abalone] from Australia, is sometimes available at about US\$30/Kg, but this product may be imported illegally” (Cook & Gordon, 2010, p. 570). The huge profits of abalone farming have attracted not only the Chinese aqua-culturist, but also those in other countries such as New Zealand, Mexico and Chile.

In Australia, the main stocks of abalones are wild. Abalone output in 2004 was about 6000 tons, with only 300 tons from the farms. However, the Howard government announced that the plan in the future ten years was to raise the annual output of cultured abalones to 3000 tons (T. Zhou, 2004, para.27). Market analysts indicate that the price of abalone will not drop in the future, despite increasing supplies from the international markets, because it cannot keep pace with the demands

of worldwide consumption (T. Zhou, 2004, para.28). In August 2014, Western Australia built the first Australian wild abalone farm on artificial reefs, with the release of 8,400 juveniles. According to Fitzgerald, “the farm is located in Augusta in the state’s south-west and is the first of its kind in Australia to be developed on an artificial reef on the seabed” (Fitzgerald, 2014, para.1). The advantage of “the propagated wild farm” is freedom from the regulations and fishing seasons that determine when wild abalone can be harvested (Fitzgerald, 2014, para.13).

It is necessary to review the abalone’s natural environment in Perth, WA. As discussed in Chapter 3, Perth is situated on the Swan Coastal Plain. Perth has a typical Mediterranean environment with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. The topography and local geomorphology of the Swan Coastal Plain have been formed under the influence of sea-level changes. Its coastline has unique aquatic biodiversity. The West Coast Bioregion is from “north of Kalbarri to Black Point, east of Augusta, and contains more than 100 species of fish targeted by recreational fishers” (Fisheries Western Australia, 2011, para.1). According to a report from Fisheries WA, “the principal commercial fishery in this region is the western rock lobster fishery, which is Australia’s most valuable single-species wild capture fishery” (Fletcher, 2015, p. 21). Significant commercial fisheries for other invertebrates in this area such as scallops, abalone, blue swimmer crabs and octopus employ “trawl, diving and potting methods” (Fletcher, 2015, p. 22). The area with the state’s major population is also a significant place for recreational fishing of these invertebrates. In Western Australia, amongst the total eleven species of abalone, there are only three species large enough to be fished, namely the brownlip abalone (*Haliotis conicopora*), the greenlip abalone (*Haliotis laevigata*), and Roe’s abalone (*Haliotis roei*) (Fisheries Western Australia, n.d., para.3). Different from the other two larger deep-water abalone, Roe’s abalone “mostly inhabit shallow limestone reefs along the west coast, especially around Perth and near Geraldton” (Fisheries Western Australia, n.d., 'Distribution and habitat' section, para.1). The two larger sized abalones, “more valuable species – greenlip and brownlip – are found on rocks and reefs in deeper water along Western Australia’s south coast, ranging from Cape Naturaliste for greenlip and across to Rottnest Island for brownlip” (Fisheries Western Australia, n.d., 'Distribution and habitat' section, para.2). Commercial abalone fishing in Western Australia began in 1968 (Wong, 2001,

p. 132) and, currently, “there is only one WA commercial fishery for Roe’s abalone” (Caputi & Hancock, 2006, p. 167).

The Western Australian Roe’s abalone (*Haliotis roei*) fishery is a dive and wade fishery, operating in shallow coastal waters along WA’s western and southern coasts. Roe’s abalone are [*sic*] found in commercial quantities from the South Australian border to Shark Bay, although they are not uniformly distributed throughout this range. The commercial fishery harvest method is a single diver working off a ‘hookah’ (surface-supplied breathing apparatus) using an abalone ‘iron’ to prise the shellfish off rocks. Abalone divers operate from small fishery vessels (generally less than 9 metres in length). The recreational fishery harvest method is primarily wading and snorkeling, with the main area of focus for the fishery being the Perth metropolitan stocks (West Coast Fishery). (Fletcher, 2015, p. 22)

Since the early 1970s, recreational fishing of abalone in the Perth area has risen rapidly. In the Perth metropolitan area, “nearly 80 tonnes in total of Roe’s abalone are taken annually by commercial and recreational fishers” (Fisheries Western Australia, n.d., 'Fishing for abalone' section, para.1). The two types of abalone fishing have resulted in a series of restrictions to control the depleted local abalone stock. “Since 1995, the season has consisted of 6 Sunday mornings from 7:00 AM to 8:30 AM, starting on the first Sunday in November. The minimum legal size of abalone taken by the recreational sector is 60 mm, with a daily limit of 20” (Caputi & Hancock, 2006, p. 167). In 2015, some changes have been executed in the West Coast bioregion: “West Coast Zone daily bag limit for Roe’s abalone is 15; there are five fishing days only in the West Coast Zone [“first Sunday of each month from November 2015 – March 2016 7:00 am – 8:00 am”]; no fishing is permitted north of Moore River until further notice” (Fisheries Western Australia, 2015). In addition, scuba or hookah gear is not permitted when taking abalone in this zone. Within a few hours, the majority of recreational collectors wade into the water during low tide to search for abalone with a few others snorkeling surrounding the platform. Commercial fishers prefer diving in deeper water for larger abalone (Fisheries Western Australia, n.d., 'Fishing for abalone' section).

8.4 Fishing experiences of Australian Chinese

I am from an inland city of Shandong province in China, while my wife is from Yantai, where she grew up near the sea. Twelve or thirteen years ago, my family just settled down in Perth. One morning we had a walk along the sea in Joondalup. She suddenly told me there was abalone. I did not believe her. I thought it impossible to see abalone on the roadside, as it is so expensive in China. Then I saw numerous abalones on the rocks by the sea. I wore sneakers so I kicked them down, one by one. Do you know how many? In almost two barrels! I immediately bought the two barrels from the supermarket nearby. At that time we did not know the fishing license is required. My wife told me they were real edible abalones, so we gladly took them home. (A3, B. Han, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

Despite varied reasons for abalone fishing, Chinese people living in Perth regard the precious natural resource of abalone as a valuable part of their local lives. Since I interviewed several local Chinese people who have the experiences of abalone harvesting, their fishing stories made me anticipate the exciting activity. In November 2014, on the opening day of the abalone season, I first went to North Beach, near Mettam's Pool, WA, one of the popular spots for recreational fishers, with some participants in my project. Duan xin and Lu fang (A2), the director and the associate director of local Shandong association, who grew up in the most important abalone production places in Shandong Province, are experts in abalone harvesting. At the first sight on the beach, I was fascinated by the sublime landscape of WA's coastline. In the early summer morning, the air was cool and fresh, and a little salty from the ocean. The endless blue sky was connected to the giant flat water. The sea was quiet and clear in a pure color of light blue. The slowly waving seaweed on the reef rocks under the shallow water reflected mottled shadows in the morning sunlight. Duan and Lu told me that the abalone live right on the rocks. I could not see any of them at first. After careful observation, I found the abalone shells are quite different from those I have seen in pictures as the natural ones are disguised with the cover of maroon seaweeds. The simple tools for abalone harvesting are usually a 20cm long screwdriver with a flat head and a webbed pouch. Experienced people modify the screwdriver's head curving upward to adjust the direction when prizing the shells off the rocks. After coming out of the sea, the abalone retracts its feet and tentacles into its shell, which feels like a pebble with its round shape with little weight. The limited

fishing time of one hour is more than enough for proficient fishers, but it is far from enough for the beginners. In good weather conditions, Duan and Lu only need ten minutes to reach the fifteen abalone limit. In the time left, they advise the friends. On the beach, it seems there is a secret race. If someone finds a large abalone, a crowd soon gathers around him and the other fishers try more to get one bigger. After fishing several times, I found that each time the experience is different; for example, on the following fishing day it was windy and gloomy, and harvesting in the strong waves was indeed a challenge and a big adventure. According to Surf Lifesaving WA, in 2015:

five rescues were reported, with one person requiring an ambulance as a precaution for a suspected spinal injury. Lifeguards warned another 40 people who were in the water amid concerns for their safety. Three people have died in Western Australia in recent years while fishing for abalone. (Alborn, 2015, para.4)

There are plenty of accidents in every year. During an interview, Duan (A1) recalled that once in the last year, an Asian young man stood beside him on the slippery underwater reefs. That morning the waves were furious and suddenly he found the man had disappeared. He immediately squatted, groping for the man in the waves. Fortunately, he grabbed the man's back and pulled him out of a big water hole between two rocks. He recalled:

I saw him struggling in the water and I immediately pulled him out, about two meters high above the water, and threw him to a safe place. He was stunned. I told him not to stay in the area any more. (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

Another participant, Han, who collected two barrels of abalone on the beach near home when he arrived in Perth, is not interested in abalone harvesting now. He said:

several years ago, one friend asked me to go fishing with him. I bought a license, but before I went he broke his leg. How did it happen? When he was

fishing, the waves were so strong and a big man, who was standing in front of him, fell down and sat right on his leg. He was in hospital for two weeks. I think fishing abalone is quite dangerous (A3, B. Han, personal communication, January 10, 2015).

As the director of Shandong Association, Duan decided to teach new members safe ways to harvest abalone in a discussion of local living experiences at their routine meetings.

To find an appropriate fishing place, you should drive along the coastlines, watching the waves to seek some rocks inside. Choose a spot near the rocks but you have to make sure it is the permitted fishing place. When you step into the water, if you stand facing to the waves and the water is as high as your knees, you may be swept by the waves. I stand sideways to reduce the dragging power of the waves. You must be careful of the rocks. When the tides are falling, it is safe. The water is just above your ankles and you can find abalones by hands. My experience is not to be in a rush when the people nearby have taken some abalone out. You need to concentrate on yourself and look into the water. Stand in one place and turn around. After searching in front, look at the area behind. Change another place after one place is cleared. Pay special attention to the cracks in the rocks. (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

Duan regards himself as suitable to be an Australian fisherman as he has a great talent for fishing. Many beginners, especially new arrivals from China, have benefited from Duan's experiences when adapting to the local life. Over the last two fishing seasons, learning from Duan and Lu with other Chinese novices, I have obtained not only the knowledge of abalone and the skills of harvesting, but also, a respect for the local natural world and the protective regulations.

Another participant, Tommy Zhan (A4), joined the Shandong Association several months ago. The first time he harvested abalones with Duan, he got numerous scratches on his legs by the rocks when he escaped from the big waves. He thought the experience was "very nice":

for me, all the outdoor activities are entertainments. We cannot try surfing [at our age]...Fishing abalone is a pastime. I do not care about the harvest. The first, I heard that there are many people waiting until seven o'clock [in the morning]. They swarm into the water like being at a fete. I am curious about

the scenes. The second is about abalone harvesting. I know what abalone looks like but I do not know the harvesting, or the places it lives. (A4, T. Zhan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

For fishing enthusiast Duan, abalone harvesting is a way to enhance his health. “Every time, I go to the beach without breakfast, so I can test my physical conditions. Body strength differs in harvesting between 15 pieces and 60 pieces” (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015). Seremetakis (1994, p. 74) interprets that in the union with nature, nature is not “the proper naming of flora and fauna, but an instructor in physical, training, and expression”. In the open environment, nature has become “a part of the modern project” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 75), which is also increasingly a transnational diasporic project.

Abalone fishing as an embodied environmental practice is particularly related to the tactile sense. Zhan describes that during his first abalone harvesting, under the water he could not feel anything at the beginning. “Duan told me it feels like a hard pump on the rock. In the first half hour I learned slowly, then I found several. I got eight abalones the first time. It was not bad” (A4, T. Zhan, personal communication, January 10, 2015). For immigrants, the sense of the new place awakens their senses of the original place. Employing Seremetakis’ statement, “the awakening of the senses is awakening the capacity for memory, of tangible memory; to be awake is to remember, and one remembers through the senses, via substance” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 28). Participation in fishing allows the people to bond, consolidate Chinese identity, and enact memories of home. Additionally, abalone harvesting is a kind of cultural resource in the life of WA. The coastline environment and the knowledge of abalone play important roles in engendering environmental awareness among recent immigrants. As Seremetakis argues, “the senses in this place are moving constantly, they are not stationary. They blend, combine and recombine, shifting positions and transforming contexts” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 30). Abalone is an agent connecting Chinese people to the local natural world. Harvesting wild free abalone is a great pleasure for the people every year. Although some of them had eaten abalone dishes before they arrived in Perth, most local Chinese people do not have experience fishing. During the abalone harvest, “tactility extends beyond the hands” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 29). They go into the sea, smelling the fresh air, watching through waves and using their hands to find the shells between rocks, even being injured by the rocks. Through

engagement of the senses in the practice of fishing, they learn about the coastlines of Perth, the currents of the Indian Ocean, and about a coastal environment, totally different from their home cities. As Seremetakis (1994, p. 29) notes, “the senses defer the material world by changing substance into memory.” The practice of abalone harvesting has expanded their diasporic sphere with the blending of memories from China and WA and thus local nature becomes a lived space and living space for diasporic people.

The knowledge of abalone is part of coastal cultures, both in China and Australia. Through abalone harvesting, people like Duan bring memories and experiences of the past into the present as “a transformative and interruptive force” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 31). In this activity, abalone is something that belongs to the tidal environment but it is also an agent that extracts fragments from the past memories of diasporans “in order to create passageways between times and spaces” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 31). Harvesting abalone is a two-sided experience linked to the experiences and memories of both the homeland and the hostland. Therefore, “it reveals the extent to which the senses are entangled with history, memory, forgetfulness, narrative and silence” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 2). The abalone in China embodies allusions to distant epochs where the relation between food and origins was more explicit in cultural narratives. After migrating from Qingdao, a seaside city in Shandong province, Duan enjoys every local opportunity to harvest abalone as he recalls the familiar experiences in China since his childhood. The abalone in Perth has displaced the Chinese abalone and together with it, “a mosaic of enmeshed memories” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 2), tactility, or tastes. In addition, Duan has passed his previous knowledge of abalone and his new experiences on via his mentoring. Through sharing the sensory practices, all the participants in abalone harvesting are changing their perceptions of the local living environment. As Seremetakis indicates, sensory changes “occur microscopically through everyday accretion” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 2) such as the memories of traditional cooking and dining.

8.5 Cross-cultural communication through the agent of food

Commensality here is not just the social organization of food and drink consumption and the rules that enforce social institutions at the level of consumption. Nor can it be reduced to the food-related senses of taste and odor. Commensality can be defined as the exchange of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling. (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 37)

For most Chinese diasporic people in Perth, catching wild abalone from the ocean reef a stone's throw away is a great pleasure every year. Although eating abalone is a tradition of both the northern and southern areas of China, according to Tong Zhou (2004, para.16), in modern times, the art of cooking abalone has reached the peak of perfection in Cantonese cuisine. In my understanding, to some extent, remarkable Cantonese skills of cooking abalone explain why abalone has had high worldwide demand even in the 19th century: early global Chinese immigrants were mainly from Chinese seaside provinces such as Guangdong, the cradle of Cantonese cuisine. According to Jan Ryan, "the overseas Cantonese make up almost forty percent of an estimated fifty-five million Chinese outside the mainland" (J. Ryan, 2006, p. 7). Among the earlier Chinese immigrants to Australia, there was the same population structure with a majority of Cantonese speakers. Some were "either eighteenth and nineteenth century sojourners or descendants of those who arrived in Australia via Southeast Asia nations like Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore" (Leong & Gong, 2012, p. 5). The Chinese diaspora in Perth, with its Cantonese background, appreciates the gift of abalone from local nature. However, since 2006, over sixty percent of new immigrants originating from mainland China have been Mandarin speakers (Leong & Gong, 2012, p. 5). Unlike earlier generations, new Chinese arrivals include young skilled immigrants and overseas students who have become more accustomed to foreign cultures and local lifestyles. For immigrants from the midlands of China, abalone is a legendary food and the activity of harvesting is adventurous entertainment. With the onset of each fishing season, information on gathering and cooking abalone is shared by word-of-mouth and through ethnic media, such as community newspapers and local Chinese websites. From a video posted on the YouTube in 2010, it is obvious that on the reef platform, participants with Asian

faces engaged in recreational abalone fishing were the majority (Thomson, 2010). For Forrest and Murphy, food is “the nexus of the ‘sensing’ self and the ‘sensible’ society, the meeting point of the individual and the communal” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 353). Forrest and Murphy (2013, p. 353) argue that the experiences of “tasting, smelling, touching, seeing, and even hearing food” are a way for diasporic individuals to encounter a new culture, and become integrated into society.

8.5.1 Western, Eastern and Aboriginal recipes

The difference between Chinese and Western cookeries is about the dietary habits. Chinese food culture is sophisticated: thousands years of the history, varied ingredients, and various cooking methods. In Western countries, the cookery is comparatively simpler. With the same food source, in China, we cook it into variegated dishes with different cooking skills. Sometimes, this is because that the source in China is not as good as it in the Western countries, and we need more complicated processes. (A6, C.L. Yang, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

The chef Yang (A6) is an important participant in my studies in abalone as he worked in one of the most luxurious restaurants in Shanghai for over 18 years. In Chinese history, the social status of chefs was not high, yet famous chefs, especially those who could cook delicacies for the upper classes, were quite respected and rich. For example, Yang Guanyi, the founder of ‘Ayi abalone’ in Hong Kong, has entirely changed Eastern abalone cuisine. His achievement in abalone cooking has been recognized with the highest Medal of Honor from the international chef association. The average price of one piece of ‘Ayi abalone’ is near 6,500 AU dollars (T. Zhou, 2004, para.21). His success demonstrates that Eastern gastronomists love abalone not only for its rareness, also for the chef’s cookery. Abalone meat is plain tasting; thus, in Chinese dishes, the delicious taste of abalone dishes is due to the flavors blended by the chefs. In every Chinese restaurant, abalone sauce, which is usually made with chicken, duck, dried sea scallops and ham, is a personal secret recipe:

In the Chinese restaurant, we use the snakehead fish because it can be cooked into a state like jelly. A 2-3 kg fish is perfect and we deep-fry it for a golden color. A mature hen is also deep-fried as well as some ham and pork rind.

Stew all these sources in a soup with dried longan, which adds a little sweet flavour to the soup. This soup should be prepared in advance. Then stew abalone with the soup for 5-8 hours. Finally, serve the abalone with some sauce made by the soup. (A6, C. L. Yang, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

The famous Chinese gastronome Shen Hongfei (Shen, 2004, para.1) states that abalone as a food source has two kinds: ‘dried’(sun-baked) or ‘wet’(fresh). Cooking dried abalone is the summit of Cantonese cookery. Shen argues that the abalone in the so-called Chinese “four treasures of seafood” actually refers to dried abalone (Shen, 2004, para.5). He explains that the best quality abalone is due to three elements (Shen, 2004, para.10-11). The first is the long process of drying. This process does not involve simply laying the fresh abalone on the beach for periods of time. Instead, the traditional method is to shell fresh abalone, marinate it in salty water, boil it in salty water, smoke it on charcoal fire until half dried, then sun-bake to a completely dried state. With ideal weather conditions, the whole process will last several months. Although the weight of an abalone is reduced by ninety per cent during drying, compared to the fresh weight, its price on the Chinese market increases tenfold. The second point is that cooking dried abalone is a real challenge for a chef. Gastronomists believe that cooking with dried abalone can demonstrate the skills of an experienced chef because he must accurately control the heat and time to deal with the hard meat. Therefore, in Chinese cuisines abalone dish can be brand-named, such as ‘Ayi abalone’, as only the top master chefs have the opportunity to show the superb culinary skills with an expensive ingredient. The last but most important point is the dual aspect of its flavour and texture. Forrest and Murphy argue that physiologically, “taste is rarely experienced in isolation, but rather as an intimate joining with flavor” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 360). What are the tastes of a cooked dried abalone? According to a Chinese master of painting, also a renowned gastronome, Zhang Daqian, it should be smooth, soft, appetizing and tender. The taste of the rim is like eating honeycombed tofu while the middle is as tender as jelly, crystal-clear and amber (Shen, 2004, para.11). His description echoes the “third sense” which defined by Forrest and Murphy that “happens in the mouth is the somatosensory, which includes pain (for example, capsaicin) and pleasure, but also mouthfeel, which can often change with textures of food, but also components such as fat” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 360).

Compared to the complicated culinary skills required to prepare dried abalone, the fresh abalone in Chinese cuisines contributes its simple ‘fresh’ taste with the easiest cooking method. The main difference between the dried and fresh abalone is that the latter is only produced in particular seasons. Summer is a ‘lucky’ season for harvesting the plumpest and sweetest abalone. Cooking is simple: shelling, gutting (the poisonous guts are not suitable for eating raw), cleaning and slicing. Another dainty way is to knead the meat with rock salt to peel away the outer slime and make the meat chewy. The dipping sauce for the raw abalone slices is similar to that used for sashimi: mustard and soy sauce. In Japan, the pickled guts are also eaten as a popular drinking snack (Shen, 2004, para.2). The idea of simple cookery with abalone is universal in many countries. The first time I went abalone harvesting, I met a local Australian lady on the beach, who had moved to Perth from Sydney twenty years ago. She told me that in Sydney, they went to harvest abalone. Their common cooking method was to finely slice the fresh abalone, heat a frying pan with a little olive oil, fry some diced fresh garlic, put the abalone slices on the pan, and grind some sea salt on them. It is ready to eat in no more than three minutes of frying. I tried this method once with the fresh abalone I have harvested. It is so different from the dried abalone dishes I had in China, sweet and fresh and associated with a smell of the sea. When I interviewed Duan, he told me another cooking way learned from his Western friends:

some Western people cut the abalone in half and tenderise it with a kitchen hammer. Then marinade with salt and pepper for a while before grilling it on the barbecue oven. It looks burned outside but the meat inside is tender. (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

However, he regards this way to Chinese people as “a reckless waste of abalone” as “in China, even abalone porridge is luxury” (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015). In the inland areas, people can hardly access abalone except in cans or frozen fresh from some supermarkets. However, this kind of abalone is only suitable for soups. It is not tasty in itself, but is used for adding more flavour to the soups. In America, “the shellfish must be cooked very quickly, usually pan-fried, or else it toughens” (Oliver, 2013, p. 2). I noticed that in conversation with Noel Nannup, he repeated twice that abalone tastes rubbery. He said that is the reason why Nyoongar people usually stew abalone with the shell, to keep the meat juicy and

tender (N. Nannup, personal communication, June 15, 2016). Actually, in my interviews, most of the participants do not think abalone per se is delicious, but is instead, tasteless and chewy. I directly asked Han whether the price of abalone is the main reason for his harvesting practice. He hesitated for a second and agreed. From my interviews, I can read the powerful narrative significance of abalone. To Western people and indigenous people, it is a living resource and an ordinary food; from a Chinese perspective, although the people have already lived in Australia, abalone is still a powerful material narrative which symbolizes a high social status. The symbolic importance of the abalone is common throughout the interviews, even with participants such as Duan and Han who have detailed physical knowledge of the species and its environment. They still acknowledge status value of abalone in their daily diets.

Shen (2004, para.8) indicates that the Chinese style of dried abalone corresponds to Chinese traditional philosophy. In Chinese cultures, the fresh material is regarded in the raw state as uncivilized. Only after continuous treatment, the raw material becomes refined. No matter whether food sources, such as abalone, or works of literature, all ‘watery’ matters should be dehydrated in order to get the essence. Therefore, by contrast to the Western appreciation of natural states, in the Chinese understanding, dried abalone is symbolic of the essence of Chinese food sources. Along with this particular feature of Chinese culture, it is granted that abalone is a luxury delicacy only for the wealthy and privileged social classes in tradition. However, in WA, as abalone has left the altar of Chinese food culture and appears on the dining table of ordinary people because of its availability in the environment, the mollusc influences and reflects personal experience in everyday recipes.

8.5.2 Restaurant dishes and home cooking

After we carried two barrels of abalones [home], we made abalone dumplings and fried abalone with vegetables. Two whole shelves in our fridge were full of abalone...At last, my child asked me whether there was abalone in the dumplings. If yes, he would not eat them (laugh). So after finishing all the abalones, I have no interest in abalone harvesting. (A3, B. Han, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

You diced abalone into dumplings. The meat will become tough when you boil the dumplings. When I fried abalone slices, it was tender with mild heat. But I worried it was undercooked and kept it longer on the heat. The meat was tough. I feel one minute is enough for frying the slices. (A4, T. Zhan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

You cannot eat raw abalone directly. It must be frozen for a while for sterilizing. After defrosting, it can be easily sliced. You can make fine slices like sashimi, serving with wasabi and crushed ginger. Ginger is necessary because abalone is cold-natured [in Chinese medicine] but ginger can neutralize the coldness of abalone. (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

In the interviews, I collected several homemade abalone recipes, which I had never thought I could prepare at home because of the expense of abalone in China. In abalone cuisine, I have found that there are two attitudes amongst local Chinese people. The first one, from those who have lived close to Chinese coastlines, mostly in the provinces of Liaoning, Shandong, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong, is that abalone is a food source in the domestic kitchen. Some other people from inland areas, such as my hometown in southwest China, present another attitude that abalone is a restaurant food source. For Mead, food habits are seen as “the culturally standardized set of behaviors in regard to food manifested by individuals who have been reared within a given cultural tradition” (Mead, 1997, p. 18). For the people who have had the coastal living experience, the given cultural traditions are intimately related to the coastal environments. Conversely, inland people are not familiar with abalone as it is a part of coastal culture. Learning to cook abalone at home is an innovation and alteration in their existing food habits and behavior patterns. In this regard, Mead concludes:

the interaction between the cultured individual and his environment has two aspects in any consideration of food habits, interaction with the food producing and food distributing systems, that is, adjustments to the physical environments, and interaction between the individual organism and the actual food. (Mead, 1997, p. 18)

In the first aspect, different attitudes toward abalone reflect the ways local Chinese people inherit and accept traditional food habits associated with their

previous living environments. This difference in my understanding is a dynamic description of the food habit pattern of regional sub-cultures, which are components of traditional Chinese food cultures. If the first interaction between food and its distribution is seemed as a public experience, the other aspect of the food habits provides us with personal perceptions of the ‘actual food’ of abalone, although the perceptions stem from collective memories and historical narrations. For the individual, the food habit is not constructed as isolated, but refers to a complex of perceptions constituted by different factors, such as knowledge, occupation, or physical conditions. For example, as a master chef, Yang cooks abalone in his restaurant by:

soaking the dried abalone in cold water for five to eight hours. In winter, at least one night is required as swelling abalone meat easily absorbs the flavors. Then carefully wash it and cook it into the pre-prepared soup with low heat. It is better to add some ginger and spring onion in it and boil it for a long time: three or four hours for small abalones and six to eight hours for big ones. (A6, C. L. Yang, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

Yang has never doubted the standard process for abalone cooking, which he learned from the school of culinary skills in China. Only through such processes abalone can be treated as a delicacy, since abalone per se is insipid. However, cooking at home, he recommends fresh abalone as it is better for alimentation and digestion. “You do not need to add the mass of ingredients. Choose the fresh ones, thinly slice, and eat in hotpot. In a restaurant it is expensive, while at home it is ordinary. This is different” (A6, C. L. Yang, personal communication, April 20, 2015). Other than the restaurant dishes emphasizing the flavors, tastes and presentations, home food habits focus more on convenience and health. As an ordinary food, abalone can even be served with breakfast.

We cook abalone porridge at home in the morning. Thinly slice the abalone after washing them carefully. When the porridge is done, put the slices in and turn off the heat of the oven. Stir the slices with the hot porridge. The meat is tender. If over cooked, the meat becomes chewy. (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

Only within the category of food, abalone becomes a cultural term with particular Chinese labels. In the local diasporic experiences, abalone blurs the distinction between the food culture of social classes as well as public and private food patterns. For the wealthy and noble people, it is a decoration and demonstration of their social status and economic strength; yet, to common people, especially in the local environment, it is merely a part of everyday life. Local Chinese people will not praise the taste for its legend in tradition; some people obviously prefer to catch crabs during recreational fishing. Their changing personal perceptions of abalone may result from the cultural traditions transposed from China to Australia and inculcated in the diasporic generations.

8.5.3 Diasporic generations

Williams-Forsen and Walker (2013, p. 287) argue that food as “a social marker” “can be used to indicate cultural belonging and identity.” Through everyday practices, food “acts as a system of communication identifying social group dynamics” (Williams-Forsen & Walker, 2013, p. 288). In a diasporic context, people will “share food, or accept food differently prepared or served, and of the states of mind which might result from any drastic alteration in their traditional food habits” (Mead, 1997, p. 19). For the local Chinese in Perth, no matter whether from seaside or inland areas, abalone evokes their memory of their origins, and “when filtered through the lens of nostalgia, such memories become a way of preserving identities now perceived to be endangered by migration, mobility, and suburban mass culture” (Belasco, 2008, p. 27). As a way to express his nostalgia, master chef Yang feels regret that since he arrived in Perth he never had a chance to cook abalone as a real ‘restaurant dish’. Yang cherishes the memory of those days in Shanghai, when abalone sold around 200 pieces a day in the luxury restaurant. He is tired of preparing “sour-sweet pork and roasted duck” with the other young chefs who can only cook these “Australian-Chinese dishes” because they learned culinary skills in Australia (A6, C. L. Yang, personal communication, April 20, 2015). Yan notes that restaurants “provide a valuable window through which to explore the social meaning of food consumption” (Yan, 1997, p. 501). In local abalone food culture, Western people will not order a

Chinese abalone dish in his restaurant, as they cannot understand such a common food sold at astronomical prices. On the other hand, Chinese people will not eat abalone in local restaurants as they pay only 40 dollars for a license and harvest 75 pieces of abalone in a fishing season.

In addition, few young WA diasporic Chinese, including the next generations and the new immigrants, have an interest in abalone dishes. The next generations of Chinese immigrants, mostly born in Australia, may feel alienated from local friends when they eat Chinese foods. Belasco argue that food as “an access point creates an awareness of the estranged position adoptees find themselves in and the incompleteness of their cultural memory” (Belasco, 2008, p. 33). One friend, who is a second generation, Malaysian Chinese, has harvested abalone for ten years. He never eats it, but his mother of Cantonese origin loves abalone. Other young Chinese migrants in their twenties generally prefer crab to abalone. One likely reason is that they did not have many opportunities to eat abalone in China as it is not a homemade food. Moreover, when they grew up in China, they had a deeper feeling for Western fast food, such as McDonalds, as it seems cosmopolitan, modern, and “precisely because it was *not* Chinese” (Belasco, 2008, p. 33). Therefore, even though there is easy access to free abalone in WA, for the young people, fishing abalone seems less about its taste and more about the recreational pleasure. Considering the stricter fishing regulations and dangerousness in abalone harvesting, they would rather go fishing or net crabs.

Moreover, more Chinese immigrants have started trying simple abalone recipes at home rather than the complicated process used in traditional Chinese restaurants. They barbecue or grill abalone with Western style recipes. Different tastes have changed people’s perception of abalone from a luxury banquet ingredient to a local domestic food. Meanwhile, the local Chinese have begun to accept other cultures from the combination on dinner tables. Through the changes in everyday recipes, people have transformed their knowledge of local material culture. As a result, their self-conceptions and social identities are transformed through the accretion of sensory experiences.

8.6 Nature's influences on diasporic social life

Not only the material aspects of individual and communal practices, but also desires, fantasies, fears, and dreams coagulating around and in the body, deeply influence our development as individual subjects and as members of all kinds of social formations. However, the ubiquitous nature of the cultural elements relating to food makes their ideological and political relevance almost invisible, buried in the supposedly natural and self-evident fabric of everyday life. (Parasecoli, 2013, p. 275)

When Chinese people arrived in Perth, they had a sense of otherness in the new land. Abalone harvesting creates a bridge between outside wild nature and the inside diasporic space. Through the practice of abalone harvesting, local Chinese people interpret the natural world differently and come to regard themselves as part of the diasporic landscape or a familiar natural scene. As Seremetakis addresses, “the landscape which people sought was hearty and healthy. There was here a disarming element of openness and liberation in people’s poses and patterns of movement” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 74). A very direct sense of the individuals is displayed in the embrace of nature and open spaces.

Working here is different from that in China, which is always drinking on business dining occasions, even on weekends. But here, weekends are free from work. Sometimes we go out with friends, not very often. Most spare time belongs to our families. How to spend the time? We read, watch TV and play ball or go to the beach. The environment for outdoor entertainment is better than that in China, closer to nature. (A4, T. Zhan, personal communication, January 10, 2015)

Every Christmas for the past three years, Duan has invited some Chinese families for a fishing trip to Albany. “In Albany, one is allowed to harvest abalone every day, 20 pieces limit for each time. We camped on the beach and fished crabs and lobsters with nets at night. The life was amazing” (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015). For them, fishing for abalone or other species, however, seems less about its taste and more about recreational pleasure, and also allows a mode of participation in a cultural tradition transposed to Australia. “This is the attraction of living here. Life is leisurely and comfortable. You can enjoy real

pastimes. It is not like tours in China where the purpose is travelling to more places within a limited time” (A4, T. Zhan, personal communication, January 10, 2015). It is obvious that many new Chinese immigrants start to accumulate a sense of the new place through their participation in local activities, such as fishing and camping. “In action people opened up new sensory registers, saw new horizons and by doing so constituted themselves into new identities”, including new collective identities, in which “people were incited to and given the possibility of producing new individual identities” (Seremetakis, 1994, pp. 74-75).

“Whose sense of place?” is the question which Seddon has raised in his book *The sense of place* (Seddon, 1972, p. 'Author's Note'). Through abalone harvesting, the ‘sense of place’ for local Chinese people involves two aspects. The first is sense of place as a cluster of memories from the original place, which helps people resist change and cling to the past, particularly when the future is unsure. Sensory memory, for Seremetakis, “is a form of storage. Storage is always the embodiment and conservation of experiences, persons and matter in vessels of alterity” (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 28). Abalone is a form of storage full of previous personal living experiences, original cultural values and strong senses of the motherland. The second is that local outdoor activities foster another ethos in the diasporic Chinese group. When we go into the natural world, we not only take pictures and enjoy the scenery, but have embodied experiences in nature. This is more possible in Australia, in the opinions of the participants. Ingold argues that “the world can only be ‘nature’ for a being that does not inhabit it, yet only through inhabiting can the world be constructed, in *relation* to a being, as its environment” (Ingold, 2000, p. 40). The example of abalone harvesting also illustrates the implicit transformation of the people’s perception of interpersonal relationships and the connections with the previous social networks.

8.6.1 A proud gift

What the various structuralisms *share* is a valuable sense that meaning is not a wholly private experience, being instead the product of shared systems of signification. (Ashley, Hollows, Jones, & Taylor, 2004, p. 7)

Some experienced abalone enthusiasts like Duan make new friends in Perth as they help other novices in harvesting or share abalone with the new friends. “Some smaller abalone are cooked in the porridge. The larger ones are shared with my friends. Sometimes we make sashimi or stew it with soy sauce” (A1, X. Duan, personal communication, January 10, 2015). As Mary Douglas (1990, p. ix) argues, society is a “cycling gift system”. The exchange of gifts such as abalone between local Chinese is one means through which new social relationships are forged. The first time I interviewed Duan on the beach, just after harvesting, he immediately gave me half of the abalones he had just harvested. From the gift, I felt he is a warm-hearted and sociable person. The abalone was a sign that he had accepted me as his friend. Duan has a nickname accepted by all his Chinese friends, ‘Big Brother’. It has two meanings: it signifies the familial closeness of their friendship and represents Duan’s role of a leader in their group. He is known for his expertise in fishing and is respected by all his friends. In addition to his role in teaching fishing, Duan also acts as a mentor in building a local life for new Chinese immigrants. Through harvesting together or sharing recipes, local Chinese have expanded and deepened their diasporic space. Abalone, an expensive gift in China, helps them to reinforce social networks in the new land.

At my first several abalone harvests, I did not know how to cook the piles of abalone at home. I gave them to master chef Yang as a gift when I interviewed him at his house in Mandurah as I think he is professional. After one week, when I had the second interview with him at my school, surprisingly, he brought me two containers. “What is inside?” I asked him. “The abalones you gave me last time. They are ready to eat. I cooked them with the chicken soup I made. It is very hard to find the proper ingredients here, so it cost me three days,” he replied in a calm voice. He kept the abalone for me because he regards it as an expensive food, despite my easy procurement of it from the sea. After three days’ preparation, the new abalone dish was no longer the free gift I sent to him. Rather, for me, it is a precious gift from a new friend. In Chinese culture, gift giving is “an integrative part” (Qing et al., p. 604), but the gift of abalone is not as the same as the gift wines I discussed in Chapter seven. High-end wines as gifts may represent the high social status and prestige of the giver. Abalone giving constructs or reinforces a trustworthy relation among individual members of a social group, as well as the acceptance of the fellowship. Gift wine is extrinsic as it displays the *mianzi* (social image) of the giver, while gift abalone is

intrinsic for its contribution to the construction of a communal diasporic space. The gift value of a high-end wine is embodied by the price (extrinsic); the value of the gifted abalone in harvesting experience is realized in diasporic interactions (intrinsic).

8.6.2 An admirable life

The loss of past sensory identities was frequently compared to the emergence of new modes of perception, new conditions of being an object and new identities of the perceiving subject. (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 123)

After the promulgation of ‘reform and opening’ policies in 1980s, the trend of going abroad prevailed in China. Chinese people regard living in Western countries as affording more freedom and space in a healthy and modern environment. Chinese people who live abroad, especially in the European countries, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, are greatly admired by their relatives and friends. Lin (W1) is always proud of his current Western style life in Perth:

Playing golf, fishing, drinking and walking dogs, I feel I am leading a common Western life. You may notice that many Western people, not very rich, yet they can enjoy blue sky, white clouds and seafood. Nature is equally shared. Rich people eat abalone in restaurants or you can harvest abalone yourself to save the budget. In Perth, many new Chinese immigrants are willing to follow me to learn the way of this life. (W1, L. Q. Fan, personal communication, March 15, 2015)

His view implies that in contemporary phenomenon in China, only rich people are capable of accessing the natural environment. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the idea of nature to most Chinese people means the elements of sky, clouds, plants and rivers. Due to the dense population and the crowded urban areas of China, ordinary people cannot afford the cost of living with more natural space in the big cities. However, in Perth, nature is an equally shared space by everyone. Further, in Chinese people’s understanding, the concept of nature involves all natural elements, the natural space and a new way of life. Amongst my Australian Chinese friends, it is easily to see their photos and videos on Facebook, Instagram, QQ, and Wechat filled

with details of everyday life, i.e. breakfast with a cup of fresh ground coffee, walking or jogging on the beach, drinking wine with Western friends in wineries, and, of course, fishing. After every abalone harvest, on the various social networks, most friends are willing to post photos of abalone, fishing, coastal environment, and even the process of cooking. These pictures of their 'showed' lives always attract plenty of comments with appreciation and admiration. The daily life with free abalone and self-fishing is the envy of their Chinese friends and relatives. Thus, they maintain a notable social status in their previous interpersonal relationships.

In Chinese culture, *guanxi* (interpersonal relationships) and *mianzi* (social image) are two key terms for understanding Chinese social behaviors. Hwang explains:

regulating by the Confucian ethical system of benevolence-righteousness-propriety, Chinese are living in a network of *guanxi* which is relatively stable for a certain period of time. In the process of socialization, they emphasize the importance of taking appropriate action at one's position embedding in one's social network. (Hwang, 1997, p. 20)

Different to the universal values of justice and equity in Western concept, to some extent, the perception of Chinese righteousness is defined by one's social role and interpersonal relationships (Hwang, 1997, p. 20). This social self considers "how to obtain various resources from external environment to satisfy one's needs" (Hwang, 1997, p. 21). In Confucian principles, in social networks, all the parties may evaluate an individual *mianzi* along the moral standards and one's interacting performance. According to Hwang, the public image of an individual "formed in other's minds is called 'face'...the greater performance one has, the higher position one occupies, or the more resource one controls, the greater 'mientze' [*mianzi*] one has" (Hwang, 1997, p. 21). When people leave Chinese social networks, they still tend to maintain *mianzi* and *guanxi* rules to interact with Chinese families and friends via technologically mediated platforms. Harvesting free wild abalone is undoubtedly suitable for their exposition of Australian new life. Participating in the outdoor activities is not merely a way to make local friends and expand local social networks; it is also necessary to elevate their social status and glorify their public image in the eyes of Chinese social groups in the homeland.

8.7 Conclusion

The first time I tried the traditional Chinese abalone dish was about twenty years ago. On the day of Chinese New Year, my family went to the most luxury restaurant in the town and ordered one piece for each person. The waitress placed a giant white plate on the table in front of me. In the middle of the plate, the cooked abalone was large, with the size of a child's palm, covered with brown thick sauce. Beside, there was a goose's foot also with the same sauce. On the edge of the plate, it was decorated with a small piece of broccoli and a redbud flower. It was hot and my mother told me to eat immediately, otherwise the meat would become tough. We used knife and fork, which made me unskillful. However, the flavour was so delicious that I could not wait to try. The meat was a little chewy, not as nice as I expected. Now I can guess the reason involved two factors, which are the chef's cooking skills and the quality of the abalone, as my hometown is far from the sea. Although the first abalone dish was not better than my mother's home cooking, for a long time, I was very proud that I had eaten the most expensive abalone in the most luxury restaurant in my town. (Li Chen, the memory in China)

I think a certain number of local Chinese immigrants have had the same experiences as me. As Han was surprised at the abundance of abalone close to the road in Joondalup, local abalone has converted our perception of Perth's material nature. In mainland China, abalone is associated with power and wealth, but in WA it relates to health, entertainment, memories of origins, and sensory dimensions of the new place. Through the embodied practice of harvesting, Chinese people have acquired knowledge of abalone as both a common marine species and an important component of local coastal culture. Early immigrants retain and return to the memories of their hometown through the flavour of the delicacy, while the younger newcomers may have their first taste with a sense of enjoyment of their new life and place.

WA's abalone, a treasure of nature, firstly, is a bridge joining the memories of motherland and the nature of Australia. On this bridge, traditional Chinese culture brought by the Chinese diaspora has been translocated in the embrace of the Australian natural world. Secondly, the abalone is an agent combining Chinese and Aboriginal histories, as well as worldwide cultural traditions as practiced in WA. Thirdly, the interdependent relationship between ethnic cultures has lasted for centuries via cooperation in abalone exploration. Fourthly, "the Chinese diaspora is

characterized not only by migration between the various nodes where Chinese have settled, but also by a broadening of relations to include groups of Chinese different geographic origin and therefore different dialects” (Sinn, 1998, p. 36). In terms of the complexity of Australian Chinese culture, it is remarkable that Chinese traditions from different geographic areas, and representing different dietary customs, have become interconnected in the context of Australian nature. Finally, abalone is a carrier assisting the transmission of Chinese traditions to diasporic generations, particularly to the Australian-born Chinese who are increasingly alienated from Chinese culture and heritage. Their interest in their origins might start with a dish of abalone or a fishing journey to a Perth beach. All these dimensions of abalone demonstrate the importance of nature in the construction of the living space for the diaspora. Rather than focusing on transnational identities, consideration of the materiality of nature in the conceptualization of a diasporic space offers a more concrete foundation to characterize the significance of everyday sensory practices.

Approaches from the field of food studies are essential to my research into local Chinese diaspora. The case of the abalone is well situated within the food studies discourse. In this context of sensory ethnography, abalone as a subject of sensory studies exemplifies the meaningfulness of natural place and human sensory experiences. Represented by individual and collective memories of abalone in traditions and cultures, Chinese ethnic or national markers have not faded in the hostland. Instead, with new experiences of seeing the sea, hearing the waves, touching the water, appreciating the photos, smelling the abalone cooking and tasting the final dish, Chinese have access to a new sense of home through reference to past and present times and spaces. Forrest and Murphy indicate that sensory studies of food traverse both cultural and social contexts because food is not only the subject of material experiences but also “a richly abstract field for cultural imagination” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 353). Combined with the framework of sensory ethnography, the study of food is an ideal approach for researching Chinese diaspora in Western Australia. Within the cultural studies of food, abalone traverses traditional Chinese, indigenous and Western culinary cultures. Through simple home cooking, more local Chinese people have changed their conception of abalone from the exclusive, privileged ingredient to an ordinary healthy food in the diasporic experience. Furthermore, local abalone deconstructs the binary relationship between restaurant

gastronomy and homemade cuisine, as it is included in the everyday recipes of ordinary people.

Local abalone also changes the self-perceptions of local Chinese people since they start making friends through the practices of harvesting. All the participants are equal in the experience, sharing their knowledge, exchanging information, and helping novices. Gifts of abalone between the members do not represent privileged social status, but rather offer a symbol of fellowship. Stoller defines material experience as “body-felt;” thus, “collective memories are evoked through the senses, from sentiments so elemental that they are beyond words, beyond the constraints of the text” (Stoller, 1994, p. 110) and with more experiences, “the memory of the senses...is never static” (Stoller, 1994, p. 118). Abalone harvesting amplifies the diasporic memories in a particular time and space to help the people obtain new senses of belonging in the collective. From another aspect, regarding their connections to the origins, free, wild Australian abalone is obviously a perfect signifier of a healthy and positive lifestyle, which is in the most common image of Australia in the minds of Chinese people. Local Chinese people are perceived as leading a respectable and admirable life by their Chinese social networks. This factor has implicitly changed their perceptions of their new natural and social environments. Stoller (1994, p. 119) addresses Seremetakis’ statement that “embodiment is not textual. The human body is not principally a text; rather, it is consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds and tastes, all of which trigger cultural memories.” The case of abalone harvesting demonstrates that diasporic space is constructed through the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile experiences that materialize collective memories. Addressing all the research questions, this materialized memory is both a new perception of the natural world (the first research question) and a new self-perception of the local Chinese diaspora (the second research question). Meanwhile, replying to the last question about the dynamic relationship between the diaspora and the material world, harvesting abalone broadens people’s understanding of their alternative contributions to the assemblage of agentic multispecies.

CHAPTER NINE

CHINESE GARDENING

9.1 Introduction

Seremetakis indicates that in modern society, nature has migrated from the collectivized and social space of peasant activity to the private space within the context of urban experience:

Nature, in the pre-modern, was an extension of socio-economic peasant activity, oral culture and rules of inheritance; it was a collectivized and social terrain. By this century, the discursive and material relation to nature had migrated to the sphere of private experience where it serves as a compensation for the encroachments of urban life. (Seremetakis, 1994, p. 131)

If we regard abalone harvesting as a collective experience in the social sphere, modern Chinese gardening can be considered as a more personal or individualized (or family) practice within the diasporan's domestic space. This chapter continues the theme of the engagement with the local material environment of Perth in contemporary diasporic life through multisensory experiences and embodied engagement, as outlined in the research questions. I explore the relationship between the spatial practices of Chinese home gardening and the local natural surroundings through both historical and cultural perspectives.

This case study reflects two features of Chinese gardening in Western Australia. Firstly, globally, Chinese vegetable gardening has been regarded as a typical feature of Chinese settlement in the early twentieth century. As an important means of livelihood to Chinese settlers, gardening has contributed to both agricultural and economic development in the host countries. There are many works that have discussed the topic from historical and cultural perspectives. However, the majority of the notable studies in Australia (i.e. Gittins, 1981; May, 1984; McGowan, 2006) concentrate on the Eastern Australian regions. Very few works, such as the studies of Ann Atkinson (1991), Jan Ryan (1995a) and Eric Rolls (1996), relate to Chinese market gardens in WA. Most of these works focus on early, not contemporary,

Chinese immigrants. As Seremetakis (1994, p. 131) states, there is a considerable difference between pre-modern agricultural activity and the practices of modern urban peasants. Hence, contemporary Chinese gardening is a perfect example for the study of modern diasporic space. Secondly, the typical Mediterranean environment of WA, which is totally different from the natural conditions in the majority of areas of China, presents a challenge for local Chinese people growing Chinese vegetables. This chapter presents an ideal case study of embodied engagement with the local material environment as part of the diasporic experiences of Chinese immigrants. However, with the recent increasing concerns with indigenous environment protection, related to the impacts of vegetable gardening on local landscape, I also discuss the loss of habitat on the Swan Coastal Plain due to suburban growth and the practice of gardening.

This chapter involves my observations on, and participation with, several participants who grow vegetables in their backyards. The first section reviews Chinese vegetable gardening within the early trends of migration and settlement in Australian history. It highlights the rich heritage and history of Chinese market gardening in the twentieth century. In the following section, I investigate the shift in gardening practices from commercial production to family consumption. In this part, the chapter discusses several points: adaptation to the natural conditions, the cultivation of Chinese species, backyard as the space for gardening, and vegetables as nutritive supplements in everyday diets. Through the sensory ethnographic research approach adopted in this thesis, the study of Chinese gardening offers a case comparing early Chinese market gardeners to their modern diasporic equivalents for whom backyard gardening reflects a new lifestyle (and livelihood) in WA. Through multisensory experiences, people begin to transform their perception of the natural world and their social world while obtaining knowing of ecology, species relations, and the demands of local materials (soil, water, etc.).

9.2 Historical background

In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the development of European colonies, the Chinese migrated as ‘coolies’ (cheap labourers) to join the

‘gold rush’ all over the world. Jan Ryan narrates the period in history: “drawn from their homeland by the lure of high wages, or driven out by famine and war, Chinese travelled to places Europeans would not go, to do work Europeans would not do” (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. the cover). In 1900s, with the increasing demand for fresh products, market gardening shifted from an adjunct to Chinese mining to become an independent part of agriculture. Several scholars agree that comparative studies of Australia and California are valuable as “they share significant Chinese migration arising from the Gold Rushes, and a similar farming history for much of the nineteenth century” (Frost, 2002, p. 115). McGowan (2006, p. 31) remarks that in both Australian and American histories, the early Chinese gardeners should be regarded as pioneers of their time. In Australia:

by 1900 there were about nine thousand gardeners, four thousand miners; the gardeners made up 30 per cent of the population...For the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, the Chinese grew three-quarters of the vegetables eaten in Australia. (Rolls, 1996, p. 63)

In California, thousands of Chinese pioneers made a living as “truck gardeners, farmers, commission merchants, fruit and vegetable vendors and peddlers, fruit packers, and harvest laborers” while nearly 90 percent of the early Chinese population made a living by gardening (Chan, 1986, p. 1). In Australia, by the 1900s, Chinese settlers controlled the local agricultural industry (McGowan, 2006, p. 31).

Frost views the development of Chinese farming in Australian history in three stages: “initial adjustment” from 1850-1880; the “golden period” from 1880 to 1900 and the “decline period” from 1900 to 1920 (Frost, 2002, p. 116). During the first period, some Chinese mining workers grew vegetables for personal consumption, and many Chinese also worked on European farms as “seasonal agricultural labour” to supplement their income (Frost, 2002, p. 118). Since 1880, throughout Australia, the Chinese specialists in labour-intensive gardening had become both managers and labourers, with great changes in farming techniques and laboring organizing (Frost, 2002, p. 119). This golden period of Chinese domination of intensive agriculture has attracted most academic attention. From a settlement viewpoint, McGowan notes that during this period, the Chinese migrant employment pattern dramatically shifted from the goldfields to rural occupations (McGowan, 2006, p. 43). From a culinary

perspective, Chinese market gardening “ended the reign of the ‘mutton and damper’, replacing it with cabbage, lettuce, tomato, turnips, carrots, bunches of grapes, baskets of tomatoes at cheap rates” (Stanin, 2004, p. 21). In the discussion of Chinese gardening success, more research has begun to place emphasis on material cultures and the archaeological evidence to provide complex views of Chinese horticultural practices, including the use of introduced plant species, their adaptation to natural conditions, traditional technologies, skills for irrigation, and the influence of gardening on local landscapes, which are all involved in the following discussion. The third stage is the decline of Chinese farming. Most of the Chinese gardeners were involved in small-scale gardens at the urban periphery and excluded by dominant Anglo-Australian culture from learning innovative gardening techniques (Frost, 2002, p. 122). Frost analyses the two main reasons for the decline. Firstly, due to the immigration restrictions after 1900, the Australian Chinese population declined. Another argument suggests that ageing Chinese gardeners ignored further innovation and were overtaken by their European competitors. Secondly, it is possible that European farmers adopted the technologies and skills from Chinese and replaced the dominant role of Chinese in market gardening (Frost, 2002, p. 122).

Frost suggests that there are four issues in the studies of Chinese gardening in Australia. The first is the emergence of Chinese farming and the changes of technology during the early times; the second is how Chinese farmers successfully adapted technology and labour organization to a foreign environment; the third is the manner in which Chinese gardeners often worked with the European farmers and investors “in a mutually advantageous way,” shifting from previous seasonal labourer hired by European farms to a working partner; the last relates to Chinese farming methods, which impressed the idea upon Europeans that “labour-intensive agriculture could be profitable under Australian conditions” (Frost, 2002, p. 129). In the contemporary Australian context, some of these issues are still worthy of examination in the studies of local Chinese gardening.

9.3 Local gardening from past to present

Jan Ryan and Ann Atkinson have a special interest in the history of early Chinese settlement in Western Australia. They provide insights into the history of local Chinese market gardening. J. Ryan (1995a) discusses early Chinese labourers living in the Goldfields of Western Australia, highlighting the gardeners' physical toil and time-consuming jobs. In her doctoral thesis, Atkinson (1991) described the participation of early Chinese migrant labourers in Western Australian agriculture.

In the late nineteenth century the small number of Chinese market gardeners was etched into WA's history as "remnants and descendants of the army of Chinese indentured labourers" (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 13). Until 1888, over sixty percent of Chinese labourers worked in the northern pastoral regions of the Gascoyne, Pilbara, and Kimberley Districts because European labourers were not attracted. According to Ryan, "only ten per cent of Chinese worked in the Perth and Fremantle metropolitan districts" (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 61). By 1891, many Chinese gardeners in the Perth and Fremantle regions concentrated their activities around the Swan River, as well as by local lakes and drainage areas. Gardens boomed around the south areas such as "Lake Henderson, Lake Poulett (First Swamp), Bibra Lake, and the South Perth, Mount Eliza, and Peninsular (Maylands) foreshores, extending to the upper reaches of the Swan River" (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 77). Chinese gardeners moved to the southern regions not only to meet the demand for fresh produce there, "but [because] the excellent soil, abundant water and good drainage of the south-west regions were eminently suited to traditional Chinese farming methods" (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 61). Atkinson summarizes several features of Chinese market gardening at the time: it was small scale, on leased land, required little investment, and was labour intensive with "high rate of owner/operator management and low level of division of labour" (Atkinson, 1991, p. 135). Depending on the size of the garden and the seasons, the employment of labourers varied. It is known from the historical record that, in Perth, South Perth and Bayswater, "an average of three to five gardeners were employed on each garden" (Atkinson, 1991, p. 135).

In the Anglocentric atmosphere in Australia, Chinese gardeners appeared in Australian history as a faceless and nameless contingent. At that time, the majority of

overseas Chinese indentured labourers were Cantonese. They called each other using the diminutive form “Ah” before their given names. Thus, on the archival records most Chinese names were transliterated using the diminutive form rather than the full names of the individuals (Chan, 1986, p. xx). Jane Ryan comments that:

[e]veryone, it seems, remembers ‘John’ or ‘Charlie’ the local Chinese market gardener...John Chinaman was very much a part of our life, our history, and yet so distant from it. Few family diaries or reminiscences omit him, and yet few people bothered to find out his name. Fewer still wondered where he came from and why he was there. (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 11)

When marketing, the gardeners sold their fresh products as hawkers. Hawkers, in Rolls’ work (1996, p. 71), “began with shoulder pole and baskets, progressed to a barrow, then to horse and cart.” In the bigger communities, the hawkers employed all the three carrying methods, according to their moving speed: “inner city to the baskets, suburbs to the barrows, outskirts to the carts” and the basket men often carried around seventy kilograms of their fresh products (Rolls, 1996, p. 71). The gardeners worked in the same way in Perth. When the gardeners wanted to sell the fresh produce to markets or hawking in local communities, they needed someone familiar with English. Full-time carters were popular in the Chinese gardens. In the 1900s, it became a common sight on streets that the Chinese hawkers selling the vegetables door-to-door from a cart drawn by horses (Atkinson, 1991, p. 142). Jan Ryan also depicts scenes from the history of Chinese market gardening:

Women remember selecting the lily white cauliflowers and green vegetables from the old wooden cart, the old yoked horse standing patiently nodding, as ‘John’ or ‘Charlie’ cut the pumpkin, and customers tallied the cheapest buy in town. (J. Ryan, 1995a, p. 11)

This selling method, introduced by European growers in the 1870s, declined after the appearance of produce markets. Yet, Chinese gardeners continued hawking after “regulations prevented them using the Perth City Markets in 1897” (Atkinson, 1991, p. 143). In 1906, between Roe and James streets a new fresh products market opened, and most of the Chinese gardeners sold products through the markets. Hawking, however, was still practiced, as it was convenient for domestic consumers.

In addition, some Chinese-grown vegetables and fruits were sold through Chinese greengrocers (Atkinson, 1991, p. 143). Although in the 1920s the demand for fresh products increased, Chinese participation in this industry gradually decreased due to the *Immigration Restriction Act, 1901*, which led to a severe decline in the supply of Chinese indentured labour (Atkinson, 1991, pp. 152-155). Chinese gardeners lost their dominant position in the agricultural industry without ongoing immigrant labour. However, their traditional skills of managing local soil and water conditions contributed to local supplies of fresh products and the agricultural development of Western Australia over a considerable long period of time.

In Australia's past, the dominant impression of Chinese market gardeners was "little men crossing the bridge on the willow-patterned plates" (Gibson, 2014, p. 45). Frost argues that it is not suitable to consider Chinese gardening as "an intact import" from China because the Chinese migrants "created a Chinese – Australian culture, they also created a Chinese – Australian style of farming" (Frost, 2002, p. 128). Compared to the stereotypical images and memories, reinforcing the importance of Chinese people to the history of agricultural production in WA, it is notable that contemporary local Chinese gardeners generally do not earn a living from it. When I visited the modern Chinese gardens in Perth, I found that they inherit small-scale gardens in renovated backyards yet continue to rely on Chinese technology and methods while adapting to local circumstances. The principal difference from the historical practice is that they now regard gardening as a hobby to be carried out in their spare time as well as a healthy dimension of their lifestyle in Perth.

9.3.1 Gardening in backyards

Meeting these gardeners inspired me, giving me hope for the future. I felt that I had been introduced to a vast, invisible network of people living full, well-integrated lives. They reminded me that, even in the midst of a culture nourished on fast foods and hurried entertainments, it is still possible to live in concord with the rhythms of the earth. (S. D. Price & Gregor, 2000, p. xi)

I met Mark Sun, first Chinese merchant in this industry in Western Australia and the owner of the biggest Chinese fresh market in Canning Vale, Perth, around ten

years ago. His market is famous in amongst shoppers in the local Chinese community who purchase fresh produce there every weekend. For decades, he has also been a supplier for many local Chinese restaurants. However, he told me most vegetables and fruits sold in his market came from Vietnamese gardens. It seemed to me that the pattern of agricultural occupation had dramatically changed in contemporary diasporic groups until the day I visited Hu Xueyou's (G1) house. In his backyard, I was so excited that I had finally found traditional Chinese gardening practices in use (Figure 6). On a plot of hundreds of square metres, the backyard is divided into several straight one-meter wide rows of soil. It was March, in early autumn. Hu had just reaped the last harvest of Chinese melons, eggplants, tomatoes and sponge cucumbers. There was only some water spinach left in the field. The autumnal substitution was the large area of small sprouts of asparagus lettuce. The yard looked vivid with the layers of various green, yet Hu suggested to me that I revisit his garden in summer to appreciate the luxuriant growth. I was curious about his passion for vegetable gardening. He had been a professional welder in a local factory for over ten years. Although he grew up in a rural village in Hubei, in south-central China, he never attempted to grow vegetables:

At the time when we just arrived here, there were very few Chinese vegetables on market, and also varieties were limited and sold at very high prices. Another reason for my growing was the influences of the news we have read on Chinese media, which said the hormones implants are used as growth boosters in market gardens. Even the commonest Chinese cabbage is grown in the water instead of soil. Under the so-called 'soilless cultivation' the products become mature within three weeks. (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015)

His intention in growing the vegetables originated from the awareness of food safety. In the last decade in China, food safety has become a national issue involving public health, agricultural and economic developments and social harmony. As urban residents' incomes increase, Chinese people, especially in the middle class, pay more attention to a healthy and relaxing lifestyle. Closely connected to each other, Australian Chinese people and their Chinese clans share the same concerns as part of their diasporic lives in Western Australia.



Figure 7: Hu's backyard vegetable garden in March (Photographed by Li Chen, March 14, 2015)

“Before growing the vegetables, I used to go fishing by the sea. I got so much seafood that we could have it everyday. Now I have no time for fishing, all the time in my garden” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). After he bought his current house in the southern region of Perth, he began to convert the previous owner's backyard lawn into a traditional Chinese vegetable garden. Hu removed several trees to expand the space and also stripped the lawn to expose the soil. The style of Hu's garden (Figure 6), with the crops “planted in straight, parallel rows and furrows, arranged to the very edge of the property”, is regarded as a traditional Chinese agricultural technique used to prevent plants from interfering with each other, and “known from as early as third century BCE, with Chinese texts such as the *Spring and Autumn Annales* and the *Book of Changes (I Ching)*” (Stanin, 2004, p. 30). In the past, most Chinese farmers were from Guangdong, “a region with both irrigated and dry land farming and labour-intensive cultivation of vegetables, rice, tobacco and sugar” (Frost, 2002, p. 123). Thus, historical research focuses on the application of Chinese agricultural skills, in particular the knowledge of irrigation, to Australian farming. However, in my study, most participants engaged in backyard gardening have little knowledge of agriculture or horticulture. I raised the question of how they garden without knowledge of the local environment and horticulture. Hu's direct and simple answer surprised me:

I find the answers through Google. Any problem I have met, such as the fruits drying before maturity, I search online. It says the reason is pollination. If there are few bees it requires the artificial pollination. So I browse the methods to learn how to pollinate the plants by myself. (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015)

In comparison with early Chinese vegetable gardeners, contemporary Chinese diasporic people are educated or have access to online knowledge. Their gardening practice in daily life is tied closely to both technology and modes of labour. However, this is not only presented through modern gardening practice. In previous times, “many Chinese market gardeners in Australia and New Zealand adopted European technological developments that were appropriate to the scale and work organisation of their enterprises”, including steam, petrol pumps, raise water, rotary hoes, “commercially-produced fertilisers and pesticides”, and “motor vehicles and tractors” (Boileau, 2013, p. 138). By contrast, contemporary practice of home gardening is a more sensorial and less technologized process because of the smaller scale.

Combining their sensory experiences with ecological knowledge (such as that gained through Google), they engage in environmental practices on a small scale in their homes’ backyards. In my interviews with the participants, I noted four distinct physical engagements in their practice of vegetable gardening. Firstly, the practice involves interaction between the people and their material environments. Head and Muir (2007) argue that the backyard is “our window onto contemporary Australian interactions with nature; a place where people spend a lot of time, and where, as individuals and households, they have a relatively high degree of control over what happens” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 155). In Chinese traditional culture, people value farmers, who rank “below the scholar and before the merchant or artisan” because “they acknowledge... the soil and encourage...the new crops” (Rolls, 1996, p. 63). Agriculture has always been recognized as the economic lifeblood of China throughout history. This understanding is also relevant to the development of overseas Chinese communities. Although modern Chinese people in WA tend not to have agricultural livelihoods, the tradition of connection to the land is still palpable in their lifestyles. It is obvious when they purchase a house. Most Chinese people prefer a house with more green space, although sometimes the house is far from the central business district (CBD) of their city. In their backyards, Chinese people are connected

to the distant environment of their homelands through physical and multi-sensory participation in gardening and with the local environment of soil, air, weather, and seasons.

Secondly, the practice engages the full range of sensory experiences, engendering a deeper sense of place and an embodied knowledge of their localities. Head and Muir assert that backyards are “undeniably sensory places; they engage us with scents, sights, sounds, tastes as well as our sense of touch” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 79). Though gardening is labour-intensive, people engage in the activity with the expectation of harvesting both plants and pleasure from their hard work. Working in the garden enables them to forget “the all-too-typical urban scene – busy parking lot, unkempt knoll, massive concrete overpass” (S. D. Price & Gregor, 2000, p. 41). “When I am tired after a long day at work, I feel relaxed to see the vigorous greens in my backyard. I am not tired any more from watering and fertilizing” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, May 17, 2015). Their passions are rewarded with the sight of greenery and flowers, the scents of flowers, the flavours of herbs, and the smell of soil after rain. To avoid the application of pesticides, gardeners usually remove pests by hand. “On weekends, I usually stay in the garden, looking for the caterpillars; they hide on the back of the leaves. I can spend a whole day removing them without feeling tired” (G3, L. H. Sun, personal communication, May 17, 2015). Due to having full time jobs, sometimes they have no time for the ‘manual pest removal’. Hu considers himself to share the vegetables with the worms (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, May 17, 2015). In addition, most of the participants agree that gardening is good for their health. This illustrates a distinct contrast between contemporary diasporic gardening and early farming in Australia, when “opium smoking and gambling were very prevalent” (McGowan, 2006, p. 38). There is much work to do in the garden during all seasons. To be an expert gardener, one needs to be a handyperson, building trellises and sheds, digging rows, carrying soil and water buckets, composting and proficiently using all kinds of farm tools. Hu commented that he has no time to go to the gym, and no need to, as he does physical exercise everyday in his garden, as well as mental work via learning horticultural knowledge online (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). Gardening is his passion and engenders bodily experience of Perth’s natural world, deepening the diasporic process of adjusting to hostland.

Thirdly, and also related to their senses, gardening involves people's emotions, anticipations, remembrance and memories in the productions of the land. According to Head and Muir, backyards produce and reproduce man things, "from the highly material such as vegetables to more abstract things such as family values" (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 89). The purpose of growing is not only about their desire for organic foods in a very different environment but rather, "it is about creating a home, a place of comfort, cool and restfulness" (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 107). In my study, people expressed an intensive satisfaction in caring for their plants. In Price and Gregor's work, participants from varied cultural backgrounds also emphasised "the psychological and spiritual benefits of working the soil" (S. D. Price & Gregor, 2000, p. x). The plants provide them "balance and a sense of perspective about life", "feeling alive again after a long day at the office", as well as "a spiritual undertaking" and an escape from homesickness (S. D. Price & Gregor, 2000, p. x). Although local gardeners undertake Chinese growing methods that vary from those mentioned in Price's work, the feeling amongst gardeners is similar. Specific plants evoke memories of their home countries while multisensory experiences in the garden provide a connection to the earth.

Lastly, an awareness of the environment deepens the engagement offered by gardening practices. Hu describes his understanding of caring for the plants. "Only after you have given enough care to the plants, can they provide sufficient food to people. If the plants cannot survive, how do they feed us?" (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, May 17, 2015). Traditional Chinese agriculture values respect for the natural world, especially the land, with a fundamental belief in an "all-embracing nature" (Tu, 1989, p. 68). This idea is represented in the participants' recognition of environmental values in relation to local material culture. They discussed their personal views of environmental problems:

we know that on the Earth there is an ecological chain. Something is waste to this, but it may be the nutrition to another. For instance, chicken manure is a treasure for plants. Through the plants, the waste decomposes and changes into foods for humans. This is an ecological chain. Why is the ecological environment damaged? The chain is destroyed. (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, May 17, 2015)

Some large livestock farms should utilise manure. Many investments concentrate on the farms for faster cost recovering and higher profits, yet ignore the waste recycling. The result is terrible. (G3, L. H. Sun, personal communication, May 17, 2015)

In China, most vegetables are grown in the greenhouses with chemical fertilizers and pesticides, causing more pollution on the land. (G2, F. Chen, personal communication, May 17, 2015)

However, their perspectives might not conform to scientific evidence. For instance, the overuse of chicken manure is regarded as another source of land pollution (Nosowitz, 2015, February 4). As to be discussed in the next section, early settlement activities, such as land clearing, draining wetlands and deforestation, have fragmented the ecologies of indigenous landscapes. However, intensive engagement with backyard gardening transposes knowledge of the natural world from homeland to hostland, shifting away from the sense of human dominance towards ideals of multispecies exchange and ecological sustainability. In Head and Muir's view, "the city, the wilderness and the farm are all linked in complex material and conceptual networks in which humans and others are actively enmeshed" (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 167). There is a growing sense of place in the Western Australian landscape, which at first appeared as a dry, dull and empty space for the diasporans but gardening reminds us that "[y]ou don't need go far, your backyard is your national park" (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 102).

9.3.2 Adaptation to the natural conditions

The history of Chinese gardening in the development of local agriculture was also an important phase of land-use of WA's metropolitan wetlands (Oline, 2001, p. 21). The wetlands in the metropolitan areas of Perth were essential to the survival of Aboriginal communities "who camped on the swamp margins and hunted and gathered the wetlands wildlife" ("Robertson Park Wetland," 2015, para.2). The wetlands were previously food gathering places for Aboriginal peoples, offering "an ample water supply, high water table and more fertile peaty soils" (Oline, 2001, p. 19). In the mostly dry and sandy coastal environment of Perth, the wetlands also provided

favorable conditions for vegetable gardening. In the second half of the nineteenth century, colonial settlers drained the wetlands for market gardens. From the late 1890s to the interwar years, Chinese gardeners rented the lands for cultivation. A famous heritage site associated with Chinese market gardening is located in North Perth and bears the Europeanized name Robertson Park Wetland. The park was primarily a seasonal wetland for Nyoongar people. It was drained for market gardens by the first European settlement in 1829. During the 1800s, it was leased to Chinese gardeners until the mid 1900s ("Robertson Park Wetland," 2015, para.4). The gardeners built stables and two houses "at the corner of Randell and Palmerston Streets" (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 2007, 'History' section). After the garden fell into disuse, with the decline of Chinese labour in WA, the land was turned into a grassy parkland. In the present urban park and archaeological site, the gardener Lee Hop's cottage remains as "a representative example of a simple Federation Bungalow style cottage, restored and put to an adaptive re-use" (Heritage Council of Western Australia, 2007, 'History' section). This case is typical to illustrate how the early settlers, both European and Chinese, contributed to the loss of natural habitats on the Swan Coastal Plain through exploiting the land for suburban growth.

The early Chinese gardeners knew well about soil management, irrigation and intensive agricultural techniques since most of them were from the rural villages in south China. In Guangdong province, soils were "leached, acid, podzolised and deficient in nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium;" to manage the poor quality soil the farmer frequently applied fertilizers with drainage and irrigation to the lands (Atkinson, 1991, p. 144). Similar soil conditions in Western Australia were suitable for rice, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, vegetables and fruits, common in the Guangdong region. With skills in management, drainage and irrigation, early Chinese gardeners became experts in growing. Farming according to the lunar calendar with its references to climate conditions and prescription of agricultural activities is the main reason for their success in growing leafy green vegetables:

The forecast of such seasonal dates as 'spring begins', 'excited insects' and 'grain rain' are exceptionally accurate indicators of the type of weather likely to be forthcoming and, strangely enough, although they fall on different dates annually in the lunar calendar, they coincide regularly on the same days in the

solar calendar each year, as do the equinoxes and solstices. (Gittins, 1981, p. 114)

Gittins takes the planting of lotus lily roots as an example. The growing should be before the birthday of the Buddhist goddess Kwan Yin, which is the sixteenth day of the second month of each lunar year. If the planting time is right, the flowers will rise above the leaves, but if the time missed, the delayed planting will result in the flowers growing under the leaves. Although the seasons in Australia are the opposite to those in China, the seasonal dates would remind the Chinese “when to sow which vegetable seeds and when to expect the harvest” (Gittins, 1981, p. 114).

However, in Perth, with its pronounced heat, sandy soil, and fluctuating water resources, the natural conditions for gardening challenged new growers. According to George Seddon, the main climatic features of the South West of West Australia are “a wet, mild winter, and a dry, hot summer” (Seddon, 1972, p. 20). This means that “for much of the year, Perth has an exceptionally pleasant climate” (Seddon, 1972, p. 22). In the early stages of adapting to the Mediterranean climate, many local Chinese practitioners experienced failure. “In the first year, the growing was not good. The vegetables near the back fence were unhealthy. I thought it was caused by the insufficient sunshine so I moved them out” (G3, L. H. Sun, personal communication, May 17, 2015). In addition, some species like Chinese celery require a strict growing temperature, since it grows in the sub-tropical climates of central China:

The environment here is not suitable for it. It is better to grow it in a green house for temperature controlling. It stops growing when the temperature is higher than 25 to 30 degree Celsius, and the low temperatures of winter harm the sprouts. (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015)

According to Seddon, there are two periods of the year in Perth in which “climatic factors limit optimum plant growth”. In winter, “part of June, all of July, and part of August”, the weather is too cold; in summer, it is too dry and “the absolute maximum temperature is very high, at 112° F [44.4° C]” (Seddon, 1972, p. 22). When I visited Hu’s garden in 2015, Perth had just experienced the hottest summer on the meteorological record. Under such high temperatures, Hu’s garden had suffered losses. “One 44 degree day, after I came back, all the leaves, which normally only droop in

the heat, were totally dried. They turned into powder in my fingers. Many vegetables died but I could do nothing” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). His sense of loss is also related to climate change intensification of summers and winters in WA.

The participants also described the difficulties involved in the soil improvement required for preparing a garden. Throughout history, Chinese gardeners knew “the value of silt” (Rolls, 1996, p. 67). Many gardens were “located on the outskirts of the city, along the Swan River foreshores below King’s Park, in South Perth, in Victoria Park, and on the margins of the lakes and swamps” (Oline, 2001, p. 19). To deal with the local peaty and sandy soil conditions, early gardeners applied Chinese traditional fertilisers including “human manure or ‘night soil’, animal manure, oil cake, river mud, mollusk shells and animal bones” (Atkinson, 1991, p. 146). In 1908, after a total ban of “sales of ‘night-soil’ to Chinese gardeners”, the supplies of animal manure and ‘night-soil’ were gradually replaced with artificial fertilisers (Atkinson, 1991, p. 147). In my study, most of the Chinese gardeners were concerned about the application of commercial fertilizers and chemical pesticides to their gardens and their effects on human health. Some of them produced homegrown compost made of leaves and kitchen waste, while most raised vegetables with chicken manure:

Chicken manure should be mixed with sand before you grow. The earth was nearly all sand when we dug over the ground. No vegetables can grow on it. This kind of sand cannot filter water. The water on the surface looks like a layer of oil. (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015)

To save on the cost on chicken manure, Hu bought the manure from a farm at the expense of six Australian dollars for a bag of sixty litres. The first time, they mixed over three hundred bags of manure in the soil. “We forked over the ground before sowing, to the depth about 15 centimetres. Then we poured the manure in, about 8 to 10 centimetres thick” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). Hu told me that through several years’ practice, they have learned the depth of the mixed soil also depends on the vegetable varieties. To maintain soil nutrients, they repeat this laborious work every three months after each seasonal harvest. Most of the

participants believe the soil condition in the eastern regions of Australia is superior to that in WA. Seddon states that although the soils in Perth area are leached shallow yellow and brown sands, they are used for market gardening through heavy fertilisation (Seddon, 1972, p. 11). Interestingly, some scholars report that gardening in WA offers “an excellent and persuasive example of environmental and technological adaptation, particularly in the use of scarce water resources” (McGowan, 2006, p. 44). However, from the contemporary environmental perspective, heavily fertilisation is not always a positive ecological practice, especially for the health of the Swan River.

Apart from the tedious job of soil management, gardening also depends on “the technology of water extraction and distribution” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 106). Rolls notes that in the early Chinese gardening, the biggest job was watering the garden (Rolls, 1996, p. 67). One advantage of traditional Chinese agricultural technologies was reflected in the “presence of shallow rectangular wells placed along the furrow tracks” (Stanin, 2004, p. 30). At that time in Perth, the manual watering technique involving square wells was familiar:

The ten gardeners who began work on eleven acres at Perth in the 1880s found good land away from the floods of the Swan River and its marshes. Good water lay close to the surface and they tapped it by digging wells three metres by three metres and one metre deep with wooden steps leading in and out so that a man could walk through with his buckets and fill them as he went. (Rolls, 1996, p. 63)

In addition, another innovative technique was “the use of storm water flows and soakages” (McGowan, 2005, para.2). Even with the hand-dug channels, dams, and wells, the most intensive labour on the gardens was watering. It was required twice daily for seedlings and in hot weather. Atkinson Atkinson (1991, p. 141) comments that the laboring “started at sunrise and lasted through to sunset, at times continuing with the aid of lanterns.” Today, the hard labour of irrigating the backyard garden is still a reality, made more pressing by chronic water shortages in WA. Chen recalled that in a summer, when her father visited them from China, he was interested in gardening as he had no such experience because he lived in an apartment in China. “The weather was too hot, the leaves of winter melon all dried. My dad was so sad

that it was still dying while he was watering so much” (G2, F. Chen, personal communication, March 14, 2015). In that summer, the duration of drought lasted over 120 days. After that Hu decided to install a groundwater irrigation system (well and pump). He consulted the Health and Environment Department to determine the water quality. “You cannot check the quality visually. They told me there is no factory or pollution source nearby. I can irrigate the vegetables with the underground water. Then we can eat safely” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). Groundwater irrigation is not familiar to most of the Chinese growers. In the Chinese backyard gardens I have visited, only Hu installed such a system. Some people believe that, although reticulation reduces the water consumption on gardening, the instalment cost is high (over AU \$3,000) and the irrigation is regulated to three days a week, which limits automated watering on summer days. On days he cannot use the system, Hu waters the plants by hand with rainwater stored in big tanks. Water has always been an essential component of vegetable gardening. As Head and Muir argue, “urban Australians have begun their much needed culture shift in relation to water,” and in many instances, the shift begins in people’s backyard (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 108). The same holds true for diasporic Chinese backyard gardeners in Perth.

Generally, Chinese people are regarded as “exceptionally good cultivators of the land” (Gittins, 1981, p. 113). In history, through farming, the early Chinese gardeners adapted the varied Australian environment, “from north Queensland to Tasmania, from tropical rainforest to arid interior,” which was “far greater than in Canton” (Frost, 2002, p. 123). Today, local Chinese diasporic people have seldom followed in the footsteps of their ancestors with regard to making a living from market gardening. However, their attachment to the land has not changed for centuries and their practices of gardening in the backyards reflect traditional beliefs and practices. Gardening has become an integral part of their lives in Perth. Working the backyard land has produced an edible landscape infused with memories of the homeland.

9.3.3 Cultivation of Chinese species

The gardens...were as much our playground as the river or our own backyards. Then, of course, we didn't know how beautiful they were, with their patchwork of dark green carrot tops and pale green lettuce and milky green cauliflower in season, the blood-red of beetroot and the purple of eggplant, and the gold-flecked lakes of melons and pumpkin at the damper, lower end of the garden. Armoured gilgies' dozed beside their holes in the square wells scattered among the beds for watering and dipping vegetables. (Hungerford, 1977, p. 3)

This is a description of a Chinese garden in South Perth between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from a memoir written by Thomas Hungerford. Early Chinese farming practices in Australia did not merely transport crops from Canton and emphasise those species in Australia, such as sugar cane, that were familiar. They were “typically successful growers of European vegetables and crops” (Frost, 2002, p. 123). Between 1901 and 1939, Chinese farming was highly varied in Australia: in Queensland, they cultivated “bananas, sugar, rice, coffee and other items;” in the Northern Territory, they grew “cabbages, lettuce, tomatoes and celery, mangoes, pineapples and bananas, sugarcane...cucumbers and melons, pumpkin, beans, sweetcorn and spinach;” in Northern New South Wales, they had the “banana industry and several Chinese tobacco plantations;” in the south, the gardening involved “a considerable range of produce” and vineyards as well (Gibson, 2014, p. 46). The Chinese also brought in “litchi, bananas, Chinese pears, oranges, mandarins, limes, apricots native to China and peaches that probably began there as a hybrid thousands of years ago” (Rolls, 1996, p. 70). They grew European and Chinese species such as English watercress and Chinese Boxthorn (Rolls, 1996, p. 70). In WA, they were able to “grow most European vegetables to meet local commercial demand and a small quantity of Chinese vegetables for the Chinese community” (Atkinson, 1991, p. 149). Apart from the common vegetables like carrots, lettuce and pumpkins, “Chinese in South Perth also grew turnips and other root vegetables as well as celery, parsley, mint, peas, beans and onions. At Jandakot, where gardens were bigger, Chinese also grew a few acres of potatoes” (Atkinson, 1991, p. 149).

It was easy to obtain the seeds of European vegetables from local seed merchants or “through exchange with other gardeners” (Atkinson, 1991, p. 151). In

1903, a pound of cauliflower seed was sold for 30 shillings in South Perth (Atkinson, 1991, p. 151). Another important way was through swapping between the metropolitan and rural gardeners. Experienced Chinese gardeners believed that “a change of soil and climate produced a better seed strain” (Atkinson, 1991, p. 151). The seeds of traditional Chinese vegetables were brought from China when they visited hometowns or were brought in by new Chinese labour. These carefully propagated seeds included “varieties of melons, spinach, cabbage, radish and beans” (Atkinson, 1991, p. 151). The present gardeners obtain seeds in similar ways. Chen Fen (G2) told me that some of the seeds they bought from Sydney; some seeds from their friends in Melbourne, who also planted Chinese vegetables at home; and some other vegetables, such as water spinach, do not need seeds and can be grown from cuttings. “An easy way is that in the season you buy a bunch from the market and cut the older stems to grow” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). I have joined a local gardening social group with over two hundred members. Every time the season changes, the group exchanges different seeds to grow more species. With the increasing local Chinese population, more seeds of typical Chinese vegetables varieties are available in Asian groceries.

Unlike early Chinese gardeners, who grew both Australian and Chinese plants, local Chinese people today in Perth mainly raise Chinese species. Hu prefers Chinese vegetables, which are rarely seen in the local markets, to European ones. In his garden, he introduced his plants proudly:

In summer, I grow the fruity vegetables like sponge cucumber, bottle gourd, bitter melon, winter melon, Chinese eggplant, and some chilli and tomato. This is water spinach. It grows very fast in summer at the temperature of 30 degree Celsius. There are some maize plants here, harvested already. (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015)

I saw several mature bitter melons and bottle gourds still left on the trellis. He explained that was for the seeds in the next season. Based on his experience, winter is suitable for leafy vegetables such as Chinese cabbage, Chinese celery, radish and, his favourite, asparagus lettuce (Figure 7). Asparagus lettuce and celery are typical Chinese species, which mostly appear on the market in winter. I had not seen them since I arrived in Perth in 2008. Hu told me that currently in Perth, only very few

Chinese people grow these two vegetables, as it is difficult to cultivate them here. The regular growing cycle for asparagus lettuce is 60 days while a longer period for celery is ninety days. “You have to spend a lot to care for them. Most people will not do that” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). In his garden, I also noticed a hanging soft trellis. Hu explained that it was made of nylon string to support the heavy fruits of the climbing plants, such as winter melon, as the growing space is very limited in the corner. McGowan comments that the Chinese gardeners “were also innovative and inventive in the manufacture of agricultural implements, all of which would have been assembled on site” (McGowan, 2005, para.2). Many Chinese gardeners similarly renovate their gardens in order to grow a considerable amount of produce in a small space. In Chinese traditional agriculture:

Every piece of land has to produce. A plot no bigger than the seat of a chair grow shallots, one the size of a small room grows wheat. When rice bays are under water they feed ducks. Eels and fish as well as the rice; the grass and weeds that grow on the banks are cut with scythes to feed the working buffaloes. (Rolls, 1996, p. 69)

I agree with Price and Gregor that, in the modern Chinese gardens, people “are growing some of their heritage in growing their gardens” (S. D. Price & Gregor, 2000, p. viii). This is also reflected in their planting of Chinese herbs and some niche plants in Chinese cultures. For example, I found *Houttuynia cordata* (fishy grass) in several backyards. Most of the growers are from the southern regions of China, where the people have a tradition of using the herb in their diet. Another element is the symbolic aspect of gardening. Historically, the Chinese gardeners grew plums (*Prunus mume*), known as the “Three Friends of Winter” – “including the ever-green pine tree and bamboo – and represent[ing] a model of fortitude in adverse conditions” (Stanin, 2004, p. 31). Local modern Chinese seldom plant these at home, yet the Cantonese immigrants continue the custom of decorating kumquat plants in front of the main entrance during Chinese New Year celebrations. In the backyards, the Chinese growers discussed their relations to China as facilitated through their Chinese plants. Coming from ‘somewhere else,’ they took pride in their physical experiences of learning to grow and create a Chinese vegetable garden in a very different environment.



Figure 8: Hu harvesting asparagus lettuce (photographed by Li Chen, March 14, 2015)

9.3.4 Nutritive supplements in everyday diets

Gardening is an important part of many people's lives around the world, not simply a hobby. It is essential; as Price and Gregor summarise, "no garden, no food" (S. D. Price & Gregor, 2000, p. viii). Food production is linked to the reproduction of tradition and practice in the migrant experience (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 89). Apart from the satisfaction of seeing something grow, enjoyment and pleasure also result from consuming home-grown foods. Head and Muir regard domestic food production as "as a kind of social good, and as an important way to connect to nature" (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 93). Evident in the vegetables and fruits, "the flavour of the earth" (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 102) embodies the memories of the homeland and the senses of the hostland. After my visits, the Chinese gardeners always sent me home with fresh produce: a huge winter melon, a big bunch of water spinach, bags of asparagus lettuce and even a box of loquat fruits. I had a sense of eating in China while being physically located in Western Australia. I stewed the winter melon slices with dried shrimp and add some chopped scallion pieces. I fried the fresh water spinach with

diced garlic, as they do in northern Chinese cuisine, or with the juice of fermented tofu to create a southern Chinese dish. The tastes were nothing different from those I had experienced in China. But the specific content of my memory differed from those of my participants. “My mother-in-law loved my vegetables when she visited us. She said the cabbage in my garden was sweeter than that bought from the Chinese market which is grown in a greenhouse” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). For the diasporan, this is a way to remember one’s origins, while for Chinese visitors it is a way of maintaining a healthy and safe diet. Head and Muir’s participants (quoted below) reflect those of my project:

every tradition from there we brought it here so that’s why we are making gardens and trying to produce chillies and tomatoes or something little, in a way to remind us of there brought here, and to continue the tradition of making produce and something from the soil. (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 99)

The productive aspects of backyard gardening are also reflected in the sharing between fellow diasporans. Gardening is linked to the “reproduction of tradition and practice in the migrant experience” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 89). In the last two years, Hu had fairly satisfactory yields from his backyard. “I gave some to my friends and sold the rest in my friend’s market. Otherwise the vegetables were wasted in the field” (G1, X. Y. Hu, personal communication, March 14, 2015). Gradually, Hu’s vegetables became famous in the market in Northbridge (China Town near the Perth CBD). His Chinese celery and asparagus lettuce are always in demand. Rather than being driven by the demands of making a living, he gifts fresh products to his friends reflecting the pride he feels in cultivating Chinese vegetables. At harvest time, many friends who either do not have backyards or do not have time to cultivate vegetables, visit his garden and receive vegetables to make traditional foods. His backyard is an important site “for welcoming friends and family, and thus becomes an extension of the house, which ‘spills out’ into it, and requires the same level of attention to décor and design as the house does” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 81). In my group interview, Hu, Chen, Sun and I sat under the patio in Hu’s backyard, facing the rows of green Chinese vegetables, listening to the heavy winter raindrops on the roof, drinking Chinese tea brought from his hometown, and eating snacks such as spring rolls, made from home grown plants. The moment reminded me of fragments of life in China, and

consistently repeated in my memory as a place of happiness and relaxation. We felt so close through the sharing of his produce. In the pleasure of cultivating familiar Chinese vegetables, local Chinese participants are “making ‘here’ feel like ‘home’” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 99). Furthermore, gardening is a means of spatially extending the inner space of one’s home, creating a relation to the local natural world while accentuating ties to our places of origin.

For contemporary Chinese diasporic groups, backyard vegetable gardening has become very popular. Similar to Hu, other gardeners are concerned about organic foods and relish opportunities for relaxing in the garden after work, but their focus has shifted “from need to more of a desire to continue particular practices” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 99). There is a sense that the Chinese growers “value the benefit of having fresh vegetables or fruits but treat it as a choice rather than a need” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 99). In recent years, with the increase of growing Asian vegetables, it is easier to find varieties of fresh ‘exotic’ Eastern vegetables and fruits in Asian markets. For example, lotus root grows in wet and sunny locations in southern China. In the past decades, it was only imported as frozen-packs, yet now it is possible to buy the fresh ones from several local markets during all seasons. Although the retail prices of fresh Chinese vegetables and fruits are usually higher than local products, traditional produce is still in short supply amongst Chinese communities. Hu told me recently before sowing that retailers have already ordered vegetables for their customers. On one hand, they are attracted by organic fresh foods. On the other, people value familiar tastes, which remind them of the old days in their homelands.

Ashley argues that tastes are “not simply a reflection of our identity but work to construct our cultural identity: we may be what we eat, but what we eat also produces who we are” (Ashley et al., 2004, p. 60). Living in a multicultural society, diasporic growers are also interested in the recipes of other nations with traditional vegetables specific to their cultures. For instance, Hu learned a new recipe from a friend from the Philippines. It is a soup containing bitter melon leaf buds (Figure 8). In the Filipino tradition, people believe that the leaves of bitter melon have more medicinal effects than the fruits. Although bitter melon leaves has been used in Chinese traditional medicine in centuries, in daily diets, Chinese people only take the fruit of bitter melon in salads, soups, dim sum or herbal teas. In terms of communication between regional culinary cultures, in my interview, the master chef

Yang (A6) described the next goal in his career with a consideration of Australian Chinese cuisine:

The local consumption of Chinese cuisine is still at the stage of early Cantonese cuisines about twenty to forty years ago. I noticed that the trend has shifted to the authentic Chinese cuisines involving varied geographic styles of cooking. More Western customers are willing to try traditional Chinese foods with the ‘real’ traditional ingredients, such as the vegetables. I have a dream to combine the local fresh and healthy sources, which are not familiar to Chinese people, like artichoke globe, Brussels sprouts or fennel, into some innovative Chinese cuisine. I believe this style will be popular for both Western and Chinese consumption. As a local Chinese chef, I have two aims: one is the introduction of Chinese traditional foods to Western people and the other is to guide local Chinese people to accept local fresh products. (A6, C. L. Yang, personal communication, April 20, 2015)

His understanding of local food consumption is a response to the growing demand for Chinese vegetables and the inevitable evolution of the traditional Chinese diets. The domestic backyard, vegetable species, kitchen and people are situated in a big social assemblage and in relation to each other. Underlying the concern with production and consumption is a consideration of the relationship between the sense of belonging and the sense of place, and, in particular, the transformation of the people’s perceptions of the material environment in relation to themselves.



Figure 9: Bitter melon in Hu’s garden (photographed by Li Chen, March 14, 2015)

9.4 Conclusion

At night I hear a horse galloping through the garden.
Panic needles my ribs. I imagine tended rows
Trampled to pieces under its hooves.

When I run onto the allotment
the vegetables are intact, mutely
squatting in the swampy turf;
the horse is a shadow dozing in its yard.

In the other country my wife be planting rice,
the daughter I begat but have never seen, strapped to her back.
Every five years a visit home and another child is introduced;
this is your daughter.

Forty five summers;
I tear strips of bark to shade seedlings,
shoulder yoke and watering cans;
the sun bakes the earth into a black scab,
burning the last traces of Quangdong
from the soles of my feet.

My long queue is grey.
All night a horse gallops through the field
of my body, chasing my blood
through arteries and organs,
through the bind of two countires,
never arriving home. (Chinna, 2014, p. 37)

With the lapse of time, the public memory of the image of early Chinese market gardeners is fading from modern life. However, flavours and tastes evoke the memories attached to the foods, the past, the family, and the lands (both homeland and hostland). It interrupts the current routine and provides opportunities for a

glimpse of the surrounding environment. Modern local Chinese grow vegetables, not for survival or out of necessity but in the pursuit of experiences that enable them to treasure the past, the present and the future. Backyards, for Head and Muir, are “important landscapes of memory where connections between past, present and future are expressed” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 70). The practice of gardening provides another material experience in the adaptation to the local environment, similar to the abalone harvesting discussed in the previous chapter. If abalone harvesting is regarded as an experience through which local Chinese people learn about the natural world of Western Australia’s vast coastal environment, vegetable gardening at home is an opportunity for people to construct a sense of place within the domesticated landscape of the backyard. Compared to the gathering of abalone in an open coastal environment, vegetable cultivation condenses the engagements of physical and mental labour within the enclosed domestic space. Both gathering and growing encourage sensory practices in labore, pivoting around food consumption. Foods can be tasted, seen, smelled and also felt. The sensory experiences of harvesting and growing transplant the senses of place, family, tradition and belonging to the new landscape. As Head and Muir argue, transplantation is not so much “the difference between there and here as it is from before and now” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 99)

Encompassing the histories of Aboriginal people, early European settlers, and early Chinese market gardeners, the land shows traces of human modification settlement and development. Despite different traditions and cultures, through the practices of gathering and growing, all people, both diasporans and non-diasporans, share in “a rural subsistence background in which human are embedded in their environment through physical labour” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 103). Behind this idea and from a multispecies perspective, specifically that of botanical life, is the notion that “instead of thinking about plants as part of the natural environment for human beings, we have to think of humans and their activities as part of the environment for plants” (Ingold, 2000, p. 87). Thus all humans, animals and the plants “on which they depend for a livelihood” should be considered part of an assemblage in a shared world, “a world that is at once social and natural” with fellow human and nonhuman participants (Ingold, 2000, p. 87). This corresponds to the argument that “the environment is not a stand alone phenomenon separated from human existence, but a configuration of connections in which humans and non humans are already embedded”

(Head & Muir, 2007, p. 107). The alternative view of a world of multispecies assemblages is a perfect response to the first research question about the diasporic perspective of local nature.

Moreover, in the context of contemporary backyard gardening, the practices of vegetable growing contribute to expanding the understanding of diasporic spatial experiences. The backyard represents an extension of the private household space. Spurred on by the same passion, and through exchanging their experiences and outcomes, gardeners communicate aspects of the local natural world to the diasporic community within their ethnic group or across national boundaries. Indeed, the mass productions of the earth, including materials, information and social networks, are “grounded in everyday experience and activity” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 107). They gather people together, and they “enfold past, present and future together” (Head & Muir, 2007, p. 107). Through studies of the diasporic practices in gardening, I found that local Chinese people present more engagement with local materials and link themselves to the hostland. The changes, which are the answers to the second research question, have enhanced their self-perception of diasporic identities with the sense of belonging and becoming.

Last but not least, regarding the environmental issues of the Swan Coastal Plain, the loss of natural landscape such as wetlands in the metropolitan regions, is particularly due to suburban growth, and the concomitant overuse of groundwater for irrigation in the practice of gardening. With urbanization in Perth area, both diasporic and non-diasporic individuals and the local government have contributed to the modification of land, to a greater or lesser extent. Although it is a broad topic in environmental protection, these sort of ecological realities directly impact upon the relationship between diasporic Chinese and the local landscape. Through engagement with the natural world, diasporic Chinese subjects begin to appreciate their natural surroundings and to be concerned with the local environment while constructing a closer relation to ‘nature’. This change in the relationship between the people and the material surroundings relates to the last research question, which concerned the dynamic relationship between diasporic Chinese people in WA and local environment during the process of relocation and resettlement. However, in the connection to the natural world, the people’s understanding of ‘nature’ comes from a homeland

perspective, which is similar to early European explorers and settlers. Further discussion on this point is in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

GENERAL DISCUSSION

10.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by summarizing my own engagement in the ethnographic research project reflecting the origin of the research in the beginning of the thesis. In the summary, I analyze the main chapters (Chapters 5 to 9) in line with the three research questions. Then I outline three findings relating to the three questions. Thirdly, a discussion of the contributions of the research to knowledge is presented based on my reflections through employing the theories of ethnographic studies. Finally, I consider the limitations and suggest further research based upon this study.

10.2 Summary

Nature is not a surface of materiality upon which human history is inscribed; rather history is the process where in both people and their environments are continually bringing each other into being...human actions in the environment are better seen as incorporative rather than inscriptive, in the sense that they are built or enfolded into the forms of the landscape and its living inhabitants by way of their own processes of growth. (Ingold, 2000, p. 87)

After eight years of living in Perth, I have a backyard that contains a combination of native Australian and Chinese species. Like my father, I have a big pot of *Houttuynia cordata*, with its fishy smell and taste reminding me of my childhood days in the Sichuan province of central China; I have a pot of oval kumquat, with its bright orange color and pungent taste evoking my years in Guangdong province in south China; and I have several native plants from Kings Park spring stalls, evoking memories of recent years in Western Australia. Since I have come to know the Chinese vegetable gardeners through my research, I also practice growing some vegetables such as Chinese celery, chives and coriander. I have become aware of the coastal landscape while harvesting abalone with the Chinese enthusiasts during

the last three fishing seasons (2014 – 2016). I have tried different home cooking methods with fresh abalone and my garden products after learning from master chef Yang and other friends. Meanwhile, I am affected by the local natural surroundings of Perth while idling in the botanical gardens, roaming lakesides or along riverbanks, and walking my dog in the neighborhood park. Through the idea of place as the outcome of physical movement (Pink, 2009, p. 32), my sense of Western Australia is embodied through walking, growing and harvesting, everyday experiences that involve engagement with nature.

In this ethnographic project, I have presented a case study of some Mandarin-speaking Chinese living in Perth, who originated from the Chinese mainland, in order to investigate the dynamic relationship between diaspora and the material world. Conforming to the three research questions about a diasporic perception of natural world (question 1), diasporans themselves (question 2) and the dynamic relationship between human beings and ecology (question 3), the project has identified a conventional process by which a new settler comes to know about a completely different natural setting and to interact with the material environment, including the first impressions and spatial practices, both individual and collective (Chapter 5), spatial and energetic practices linked to the material surroundings through traditional principles (Chapter 6), the practices of livelihood engaged with local natural materials and elements (Chapter 7), and deep engagements with the natural world in both wild (Chapter 8) and domestic spaces (Chapter 9). The thesis has involved five subthemes: ‘nature as space’, ‘the spatial practice of Feng Shui’, ‘local natural treasures’, ‘abalone harvesting’ and ‘Chinese gardening’. ‘Nature as space’ focused on the idea of nature as a space in the process of becoming place via an analysis of people’s everyday spatial practices. Their collective and individual senses of belonging and becoming along with their memories of their original places are represented in their first impressions of Perth, daily walking and outdoor activities. Following a discussion of the relations between nature and human practices, the contemporary ‘practice of Feng Shui’, especially in the diasporic context, was considered as a specific spatial practice in daily life. The ancient Chinese philosophy of Feng Shui is interpreted as an environmental ethic concerning the harmonious relationship between one’s physical surroundings and oneself. Regarding the materials involved in the diasporic process, an exploration of the ‘local natural products’ of woods, jewels and

wine was undertaken from both historical and cultural perspectives to demonstrate the influences of local material culture on WA's Chinese history and on the development of diasporic cultures. The in-depth cases of abalone harvesting and Chinese gardening concern substantive participant observation with Chinese diaspora in Perth. Focusing on local abalone recreational harvesting and backyard vegetable gardening in WA's contemporary Chinese community, the discussions in these two chapters address all the three research questions, which asked about the transformation of people's perceptions of nature, their converting self-perceptions through livelihood, and the dynamic relations between the people and the natural world.

On the basis of the analysis, I found that my orientation to the research was essential to comprehend the dynamic relationship between diaspora and the local environment more fully. Employing theories of ethnography, all the analytic subthemes offer insights into Chinese and Australian histories, the embodied experiences of the participants, and my self-conscious and reflexive sensory participation as both an insider ethnographer and a "sensory apprentice" (Pink, 2009, p. 70). This cross-disciplinary project has brought together the study of contemporary Chinese diaspora in Australia with ethnographic studies of local nature in an environmental humanities framework.

10.3 Findings

Building on theories of ecocultural studies and research into diaspora, this project has explored the material engagement of immigrants with their environments in the construction of diasporic culture. In order to respond to the research questions, which relate to the transformation of people's perceptions of the local natural world and their self-perceptions via everyday sensory experiences, through the ethnographic analysis of the human-nature relationship, I will now present three main findings from my study conforming to the three research questions.

10.3.1 Evolution in the perceptions of nature

My first finding is that by engaging in the materiality of nature in their daily practices in WA, these people from mainland China have gradually transformed their perception of the natural world through the influences of their traditional cultures. In the analysis of transnational diasporic space, nature acts as a space in the everyday lives of local Chinese people through embodied practices such as individual and collective walking, and other outdoor activities. Their new perception of nature hybridizes with their previous impressions of an expansive nature in China, existing largely outside of their urban lives because suburban sprawl is common in Chinese cities with large populations. Spatial practices facilitate a deep sense of nature for diasporic people on a daily basis. Although some people do not regularly exercise outdoors, the idea of domestic places as the lived spaces of nature offers an alternative understanding of embodied practices. The perception of nature gained from everyday spatial practices also transforms the sense of place of Chinese people. The hostland is not simply conceptualised as a geographic location with a dry, hot and drought-prone landscape. Rather, the spatial practices engender an embodied means of understanding and relating to the natural world.

The practice of Feng Shui helps people reevaluate the local environment by transplanting a sense of homeland to hostland. Therefore, through Feng Shui, the strange, unknowable and distant environment of the past (there) is conceived as the familiar, appreciable, and sustainable nature of the present (here). Regarding the senses of ‘here’ and ‘there’, the local natural products of wood, jewels and wines act as prompts, stimulating Chinese people’s consciousness of Western Australian nature. These materials provide an access point for people to learn about the new land through everyday diasporic practices. Through this dynamic relationship with the material environment, the people alter their perceptions of local nature. Nature is not remote, wild, and strange; in addition to its role as the space of their everyday lives, it is also practical, domestic and intimate.

It is worth noting too that Chinese diasporic subjects perceive Perth’s natural environment from a homeland perspective, heavily influenced by traditional Chinese culture. The aspects of the local natural world do not conform to their homeland

conceptions, as evident, for instance, in the native plant communities of banksia wetland and paperbark swamps existing only in Western Australia. The Chinese people in my project presented a similar understanding of nature to early European explorers: through interaction with the wild and strange natural surroundings, they find reassurance and make sense of the hostland. For example, from the ecological insights conveyed by the participants, Chinese traditional views impart a sense that nature is within their daily lives, rather than sequestered in national parks or reserves.

Abalone recreational harvesting and backyard gardening cogently demonstrate the transformation of diasporic conceptions. Local abalone helps the people acquire marine knowledge, appreciate coastal cultures, and practice foreign culinary skills. In the Chinese tradition, abalone is associated with power and wealth, but in Western Australia, it represents a natural, healthy and relaxing lifestyle. Local Chinese people transform their perception of abalone through recreational harvesting and domestic consumption. As a treasure of Western Australia, abalone is a living bridge connecting the memories of homeland and the senses of hostland. Additionally, abalone's natural and culinary history evokes various regions of China, Europe and Aboriginal Australia via historical trading and modern culinary exchanges. Nature also acts as a substrate for storing memories and the senses of diasporic life. This is particularly expressed through the example of vegetable gardening in local Chinese backyards. Despite the stereotypes of Chinese vegetable gardeners in the early settlement, local Chinese gardeners today treat the cultivation of plants as a form of home-based recreation done mostly after work. In order to successfully raise Chinese vegetables and herbs in the new land, they become interested in learning more about the Mediterranean climate and then experiment with agricultural technologies and solutions. In the backyard, dry, hot and vacant land is transformed into a friendly, pleasant and productive space. The people convert their previous conceptions of nature while transforming self-conceptions (as well as familial and social relations) through the agency of the natural elements.

10.3.2 Transforming self-conceptions engaged with nature

The second finding of this project is that everyday practices in the environment not only change diasporans' perception of nature, but also transform their conceptions of self. Firstly, spatial practices, such as walking and excursions, activate Chinese people's senses of becoming and belonging. The sense of becoming involves the way they engage with current diasporic life. While diasporans carry previous memories from their original places, local nature provides embodied connections between here and there as well as between past and present. Through new spatio-temporal practices, people reevaluate their positions in the diasporic community, thus realising their values and acquiring a sense of belonging. Collective spatial practices integrate the individual senses of becoming and belonging into communal ones, and thus the diasporic community becomes a tangible and meaningful place. Through engagement with nature, diasporic identity is produced through a set of relations between objects and products, and 'diasporic space' is rendered social, ecological and corporeal.

Secondly, in an unconscious application of Feng Shui principles to everyday spatial practices, people gradually realise that the nature is not an "inert substance to manipulate" but "animate matter to encounter dialogically" (J. C. Ryan, 2017, p. 218). Since the notion of Feng Shui has shifted from geomancy to ensure good luck to a practice of harmonious development, the diasporans seek a lifestyle in harmony with the local natural world. Consequently, they do not merely pursue physical balance with the external surroundings, but reshape an internal spiritual balance according to both the natural and social environments.

Thirdly, the study of abalone recreational harvesting offers a distinctive example of how the local Chinese diaspora transform their self-conceptions through exchanges with the environment. As a delicacy in Chinese culinary cultures, abalone is unfamiliar to ordinary people's cuisines. Although it is easily obtained on the coastlines in Western Australia, for local Chinese people, abalone is still perceived as having a rarified value. In a collective harvesting, members share the experiences and the outcomes of fishing to enhance their sense of belonging. Therefore, abalone becomes an agent to help people expand their social networks. Moreover, abalone as a

gift between individuals becomes a symbol of trust and fellowship in the communal diasporic space. In another regard, abalone harvesting represents an admirable Western lifestyle based on abalone's value in Chinese culinary culture and the people's long-standing impressions of Western countries. In previous Chinese social networks, the diasporic people elevate their social images by displaying the relaxing and healthy aspects of Australian life.

Lastly, to some extent, Chinese vegetable gardening facilitates a similar transformation in self-conception to that undergone by diasporic subjects in abalone harvesting. In the colonial years, the pioneering Chinese undertook both abalone harvesting and vegetable gardening in order to earn a living. Western Australian abalone was processed to supply remote Asian markets, while various vegetables and herbs grown in WA catered to local demands. However, for contemporary Chinese people in Perth, the engagement in harvesting and growing is not necessary for purposes of livelihood. Some of them show a strong interest in abalone harvesting initially attracted by two factors: the availability of a rarified Chinese food with high social value, and interest in a new form of recreation in the hostland. In the example of Chinese vegetable growing, most of the people do not have prior gardening experience. The primary reasons for cultivating a garden include a concern for health and a desire to maintain a sense of their home country. These spatial practices produce sensory and perceptual landscapes through material engagement. Through this engagement, Chinese people transform self-perceptions of their diasporic identities from 'sojourner' to 'citizen', as well as transforming their relation to the natural world from inscriptive to incorporative.

10.3.3 Dialogical relationship between diaspora and nature

The third finding responds to the diaspora-nature relationship in the final research question. My research on the diasporic experience of people from coastal provinces of the Chinese mainland has revealed that WA's natural world is reshaping their traditional Chinese culture into a specific Chinese diasporic culture through daily interactions. The point of departure is the people's perception of nature as space, followed by the spatial practices such as Feng Shui that closely involved natural

elements. Material engagement with WA's wood, gemstones, pearls and wines demonstrates the intimate relationship between local nature and diasporic experiences. Following a brief review of the influences of material elements on diasporic cultures, abalone harvesting and Chinese gardening were presented as persuasive examples illustrating the transformation of diasporic relations to the natural world in everyday practices.

Feng Shui is regarded as a practical system of spatial arrangement demonstrating an understanding of internal and external harmony in human bodies and the universe. Although most diasporic Chinese are not aware of its existence in everyday life, they inherently practice Feng Shui as a traditional ethics of human-nature harmonization with implications for the sustainable development of self, community, and place. More than a Chinese geomancy, a popular folklore or a modern cultural phenomenon, Feng Shui is, for local Chinese people, a way to achieve a balanced relationship between everyday life and the environment as well as a means for improving the quality of diasporic living.

All the natural resources mentioned in Chapter 7 including jarrah, sandalwood, opals, pearls, and grape wine, are familiar to Chinese consumers. After examining the importance of these material elements in Chinese history and traditional culture, it is clear that Chinese people have become attached to the new land via the incorporation of some local natural products into their lifestyles. The precious natural products of wood, jewels and wine in Western Australia have contributed to the formation of the dialogical relationship between Chinese diasporic cultures and the natural world. In the early years, Chinese settlers devoted their interests to international trades, using these products to make a living. Through mining, growing, lumbering, and pearling, diasporic people started to observe the local natural world and learn about the new landscape. Through the process of manufacturing goods, Chinese people throughout Australian history developed perceptions of local nature and participated in dynamic relations with it. Modern diasporic Chinese subjects have become more aware of their interdependence association with the land. The integration of non-human entities in the diasporic space with human agents transforms the idea of exploiting natural resources to a concern with sharing and sustaining resources, as is particularly evident in the interview with the sales managers in the local wine industry (Chapter 7).

Abalone and Chinese vegetables are material instantiations of the integrative and dialogical relationship between local nature and diasporic Chinese people. Harvesting local abalone and raising Chinese vegetables allow diasporans to maintain traditional diets while adapting to the new environment, although local abalone differs to the Chinese species and the Chinese vegetables are grown according to the seasons of the southern hemisphere. In the ongoing exchanges between nature and the people through daily experiences, the natural world for the local Chinese people becomes an inseparable part in the engendering of diasporic space and place. Through these practices, Chinese people have found a way to adapt to Australian life within different geographical and cultural contexts. Contrary to the view of nature as background, object, or prospect, Chinese diasporans realize that the importance of an energetic relationship to nature is in its conservation.

10.4 Contributions to knowledge

Grounded in the findings I have discussed above, this project has contributed to knowledge, particularly in three areas: the ethnographic study of diaspora, food studies, and cross-cultural communication about the environment.

10.4.1 Ethnographic studies in diasporic practices

Guided by the idea of multispecies mutuality of a material environment, this project has demonstrated the transformation of diasporic cultures under the influences of material forces. In practice, the first contribution of this project is the application of sensory ethnography to the study of everyday diasporic experiences engaged with nature through the perspective of an insider-ethnographer.

A sensory approach for Pink, as with other type of ethnography, “cannot simply be learnt from a book, but will be developed through the ethnographer’s engagement with her or his environment” (Pink, 2009, p. 4). Inspired by her view, I have highlighted diasporic multisensoriality in this project through the ethnographic practices of interviewing, participant observation, film-illustration and self-reflective

first-person composition. Sensory ethnography is certainly the main approach taken to research local Chinese diasporic groups, as proposed in the beginning (Chapters 3 and 4). Inspired by existing research (i.e. Law, 2001; Pink, 2009; J. C. Ryan, 2017; Seremetakis, 1994), this project has concentrated on diasporic sensory experiences and perceptions of daily life. An ethnographic approach, as Pink defines, involves “exploring people’s multisensory relationships to the materialities and environments of their everyday lives, and to their feelings about them, [offering] a remarkably rich and informative source of knowledge for academic and applied researchers alike” (Pink, 2009, p. 19). In the diasporic experiences of Chinese immigrants becoming familiar with Perth, people construct relationships with and adapt to the natural world through their multisensory practices. The study of their diasporic practices corresponds with Pink’s model of sensory ethnography, which outlines a set of principles involving “a focus on questions of perception, place, knowing, memory and imagination” (Pink, 2009, p. 23). It also follows Ingold’s argument that “such processes as thinking, perceiving, remembering and learning have to be studied within the ecological contexts of people’s interrelations with their environments” (Ingold, 2000, p. 171).

As discussed in the last section of my findings, the perception of one’s natal environment and the perception of the local landscape of the hostland are mediated by the sensuous experience of emplacement. Pink proposes that “perception [as] fundamental to understanding the principles upon which a sensory approach to ethnography must depend would not be disputed” (Pink, 2009, p. 26). Spatial practices such as walking, outdoors activities and Feng Shui are ways of perceiving and engaging with the environment. With the everyday use of local natural products, diasporic people begin to understand the environment and rethink their relations with responsibilities to the natural world. Harvesting (Chapter 8) and growing (Chapter 9) provide people a direct way to appreciate that the natural world is “not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view of the world but of taking up a view in it” (Ingold, 2000, p. 42). Examining the ethnographic material from the cases, I conclude that, contrary to their initial impression of the local environment, through everyday sensuous encounter with nature, diasporic Chinese people perceive the new landscape anew, hence transforming their sense of place.

The discussion of the concepts of place and space is presented in Chapter 3. It is widely accepted by scholars that the interconnection of place, space and humanity is pivotal to studies of diaspora. In the scope of sensory ethnography, “place has been of continuing importance in the ethnographic practice of anthropology” (Pink, 2009, p. 29). This project illustrates the relation between natal place (homeland) and the place of Western Australia (hostland) by describing people’s bodily encounters with their physical surrounds. Ethnographic place expresses materiality, entanglements, emplacement, and multisensoriality, both human and non-human. The research adopted a framework in which the diasporic sense of place is constructed as an everyday process. The idea of diasporic place is a unique configuration of material and sensorial aspects within a continuous process of diasporic events, “where representations are known in practice” (Pink, 2009, p. 42).

In this study, the transmission of sensory knowledge between individuals and generations is evident in every case study. Pink argues that, generally, scholars with an interest in the senses “agree... that the transmission of knowledge should be seen as a social, participatory and embodied process” (Pink, 2009, p. 34). The knowing is inextricable from practices, knowledge, and learning. In my project, I participated in the practices of abalone harvesting and vegetable growing. Through these embodied experiences with other fellow members, learning harvesting skills and practicing agricultural technologies, we obtained knowledge of the local natural world and experience in culinary practices. In doing so, I made the knowing my own rather than simply obtaining that of others. This study explores knowledge transmission, via “physical imitation and sensory information” (Pink, 2009, p. 36), between individual members embodied in physical practices. Sensory knowing in this study is considered as “an everyday process” and as “continuous throughout the life course” (Pink, 2009, p. 41). The reflexive approach from the perspective of an insider ethnographer produces embodied narrations and material representations in the ethnographic framework.

The idea of “knowing in practice” is sometimes extended to a “imagining in practice” when researchers “use their own imaginations to generate a sense of the pasts and futures of others” to share the presented place with the participants (Pink, 2009, p. 37). In my study of the diasporic groups, the sense of the past and present was situated within the discourse of sensory memory. Along with comparison of the

senses of space in the previous and current living places, sensory memory is a central part of the process in which diasporic knowing is constituted by individual memory and collective memory. Pink suggests that “the understanding of sensory memory as embodied, and continually reconstituted through practice, are particularly relevant to an ethnographic methodology that attends to the body and place” (Pink, 2009, p. 38). As I discussed in Chapter 3, there are two key categories of memory: collective sensory memory and individual practices of memory. In this research, collective sensory memories engage the ethnic cultures and experiences of the emplaced diasporic group. For example, the collective spatial practice of walking in the national park evokes the sensory memory of urban space in China, but also creates a sense of a shared tangible space, which comprises the sense of becoming and belonging. Undoubtedly, collective sensory memory involves individual practices of memory. Stoller (1997, p. 85) states that the emplaced individual’s memory process is constituted by embodied practices, not only constructed by the sensory environment. Pink also emphasises the relationship between personal memory and place, that “our experiences of place – and its social, physical and intangible components – are inextricable from the invocation, creation and reinvestment of memories” (Pink, 2009, p. 38). In my study, the personal memories of my participants enabled me to understand how an individual’s past experiences contribute to the constitution of the senses of present place. From different geographic regions in China, the participants brought varied cultural backgrounds and memories to a shared emplacement. The individual sensory memories resulted in embodied and continually reconstituted collective memories. The application of theories of sensory memory to this research helped me to generate insight into the ways that diasporic people recount, define and reflect on their memories of place and space. Additionally, sensory memory enabled me to incorporate my own memories into the research. My first impressions of Perth and my first taste of abalone generated auto-ethnographic accounts and reflexive reconstruction of experience.

Pink contends that ethnographers “rely on both memory and imagination (and indeed the distinction between the two practices can become blurred to some extent) to create what we might call ethnographic places” (Pink, 2009, p. 38). She advocates a focus on “how imagination is implicated in everyday place-making practices” (Pink, 2009, p. 39). This research followed her understanding of imagination as “integral to

our everyday individual ways of being in the world in a more general sense” while, in some circumstances, seeing imagination as “a collective practice that operates in ways similar to those suggested for collective memory” (Pink, 2009, p. 39). This research reflected an understanding of imagination as less about the future and more concerned with experiences in the past and the present (or immediate past) involving emplaced daily practices associated with the multisensoriality of “our actual social and material relations” (Pink, 2009, p. 39). Consequently, diasporic space and place are not located in peoples’ imaginations, but in “the material realities and discourses that inspire them to action and in the outcomes of this action” (Pink, 2009, p. 40).

In summary, in the scope of sensory ethnography, to research the relationship between the local natural world and the diasporic Chinese people of Perth, accounts of experiential diasporic place and space enabled me to understand the fellow members’ perceptions, memories and imaginations on a “similar, parallel or related” position through “a personal engagement and embodied knowing” (Pink, 2009, p. 43). The local Chinese people perceive and know the new natural world through multisensorial engagements involving individual and collective memories and imaginations. This experiential process of everyday encounters is embodied, entangled, interactive, continuous and transformative. Meanwhile, the diasporans have become integral to the reconstitution of the material and sensory diasporic environment through the transformation of their self-conceptions.

From the perspective of multispecies ethnography, the studies of local flora, gemstones, pearls, abalone and Chinese gardening enabled me to conceptualize the diasporans as participants in multispecies assemblages, in dynamic relation to agentic beings. Recent scholarship challenges “the boundaries of ‘wild’ and ‘domesticated’” as well as “‘native’ and ‘non-native’ species”, “highlighting the agency of animals in these transformative relations” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 10). My discussion of the Chinese diasporic perception of nature emphasises the idea of interspecies mutuality. For instance, the Chinese diaspora encounter local abalone in the wild bioregion of the coastline while also engaging in the domestic space of Chinese culinary culture. From WA’s coastal environment to domestic Chinese kitchens, the abalone case study explored a “global multispecies diasporas and processes of change” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 11). The studies of local jarrah trees, sandalwood trees and Chinese backyard gardening captured the richness of native and non-native connections through intimate

plant-human companionships. In addition to the agencies of animals and plants, the understanding of ‘mutual ecology’ from the perspective of cross-species companionship reflects principles of Feng Shui, which deconstructs the binaries of human and non-human. Therefore, the influences of Chinese traditions enable the diasporic people to experience a deep sense of the host place and a new diasporic space, following “a cultural and ecological logic” (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 12).

10.4.2 Connection to food studies

Another contribution of this project is through sensory studies of food, which provide a way to understand the dynamic relations between the material culture and the diaspora in everyday practices. In Chapter 3, I discussed the conceptual role of food studies in this project. Sensory experiences of wine, abalone and Chinese vegetables in this research were created by individual and collective practices, in communal memories and imaginations, and constituted with both immediate and historical material resonances. Firstly, the individual encountered the food cultures via the sensory experiences of seeing, smelling, tasting, or even hearing during the practices of learning, harvesting, growing, and cooking. Through the agent of food, individual experience is enclosed in a cultural and social context. Secondly, collective memories and imagination shaped the individual perceptions of the food as a way to remember the past and to adapt to the present. Thirdly, diasporic place and space are constituted through tangible immediate and less tangible historic constructions of food.

Forrest and Murphy comment on the importance of sensory studies of food. For them, “food is such a relentlessly material subject, even as tasting it is also a richly abstract field for the cultural imagination” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 353). Early studies synchronizing food and the senses focus on the visual and aural senses but overlook ‘taste’ because it is understood as deeply subjective. More recently, with the formulation of an “anthropology of the senses,” food studies has become more formally acknowledged as the sensory contemplation of “the intimate aspects of ‘everyday life’” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 356). However, major trends in the research on taste pay attention to commodity and aesthetics, although they do explore human experience “from a more fully complex position” (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p.

357). Apart from involvement in these two aspects, this project primarily treated sensory experiences with food as an inextricable part of the diasporic experiences highlighting the interactions between the local food resources and the transformation of culinary cultures. Within the scope, this research presented an understanding of diasporic place and space and the multisensorial meanings of both the individual diasporian and collective cultures through food-related practices.

Broadly speaking, the sensory study of food in this project occurred at three levels: individual experience, ethnic culture and diasporic context. At an individual level, Forrest and Murphy summarize:

a personal or cultural memory, closely linked to aroma neurologically, will affect the action, meaning, and attitude of eating or eating particular foods. Even place matters, as eating a familiar food in an exotic setting (or vice versa), will change the sensorial experience. (Forrest & Murphy, 2013, p. 357)

Take abalone as an example. Personal experiences with this Chinese delicacy are extremely different, particularly between diasporic Chinese people from various geographic regions. For those who have not tasted abalone before, the first bite may disappoint, yet they continue to regard abalone as a glorified and expensive food, based on their previous understanding of traditional Chinese culture. Their cultural understanding of abalone explains some of their motivation to participate in every harvest despite the fact that harvesting is a laborious and dangerous experience. However, sense and food are not limited to taste, in that the personal perception of food encompasses multisensorial experience and knowing, including the influences of culture, remembering and imagination.

At the cultural level, Pink suggests that “collective memories are invested in food practices” (Pink, 2009, p. 38). This project analysed wine, abalone and Chinese vegetables as sensory texts. For instance, consumption of red wine and abalone symbolises a distinction between Chinese social classes. In traditional memory and imagination, both products should be served in luxury restaurants by well-dressed waiters. A lavish dining table, melodious background music, attractive presentation and the scent of the food with its delicious flavour comprise a multisensory perception of a food with a strongly rooted cultural image. Through the practices of learning,

harvesting and cooking, I obtained a comprehensive understanding of the ways diasporic knowing is affected by sensory awareness. The sensory experiences of the foods evoked a collective sense of origin, across the distance between the home countries and the hostland to create a familiar space. Simultaneously, it incorporated past memories and present sensorium in the constitution of the new embodied diasporic place.

Sensory studies of food offer an access point to investigate material diasporic environments and the cultural meanings of food. Local species, home growing and cooking alter the ways in which people engage sensorially with the materials. To cook traditional foods after harvesting or cultivating, diasporans must first learn about the coastal habitats and WA's ecology as well as the agricultural practices suitable for local conditions. Cooking and eating in the hostland provide opportunities for new sensory experiences different to one's memories of the homeland. Thus, diasporic materiality shapes ways of knowing through new sensory modalities. My auto-ethnographic approach allowed me to reflect on the diasporic experiences of my participants. To understand the transformation of diasporans' perceptions of the world, it was appropriate to embed sensory studies of food within everyday diasporic practices and their historical and cultural contexts.

10.4.3 Cross-cultural communication about environment

This project examined the dialogical relation between diasporic culture and local nature through everyday practices such as eating, gardening, walking and taking part in recreation. In presenting how Chinese people in Perth construct a new diasporic space and convey their conceptions of 'nature' according to their traditions, this research also explored the value of cross-cultural communication about environment. In the Literature Review chapter, I discussed the similarities between Aboriginal Australian concepts of 'nature' and Chinese views, particularly the Taoist understanding of 'nature' as material exchange and energetic balance. During the process of my research, I discovered that Chinese diasporans learn about local ecology while sharing traditional views and practices. This point was demonstrated by Richard Wang's antique collections, Duan's abalone harvesting and home cooking,

and Hu's practice of vegetable gardening. Therefore, not only is there a visible association between Chinese diasporic culture and local ecological surroundings, there was also a dialogical relationship, or two-way communication, between diasporic and 'indigenous/native' cultures including Anglo-European, Aboriginal, and other non Anglo-Australian groups.

10.5 Limitations and prospects

Within the context of ethnography, this research focused on material engagement with the natural world in the construction of diasporic space. It describes Western Australian Chinese diaspora in terms of sensory and multispecies ethnographic approaches, and particularly food studies, through the exploration of everyday sensory experiences. However, the study also had some limitations.

The first is that the project concentrated on the influences of the material environment, hence overlooking political and ideological relations between diasporans and the hostland. In the discussion of ethnographic methodology, Pink suggests that "it recognises the emplaced ethnographer as her or himself part of a social, sensory and material environment and acknowledges the political and ideological agendas and power relations integral to the contexts and circumstances of ethnographic processes" (Pink, 2009, p. 23). In my project, the highlights of the natural world in the development of diasporic transmission and adaptation is not to deny the valuable influences of social, economic and ideological factors on the constitution of diasporic space. On the contrary, I admit the constitution of such a space is entangled, embodied, tangible and abstract in relation to complex social and ecological networks, events and processes. The second limitation concerns the recently growing debate on the exploitation of local Australian natural resources, such as land, mines, agricultural products and real estate, by Chinese investments (Ferguson, Hendrichske, Dent, & Li, 2016). Indeed, this issue provides another entry point to investigate the relationship between Perth's environment and Chinese immigrants. However, limited in the research space and not surfacing in my interviews, participant observation, or elsewhere, the issues were not discussed as a topic, which is more involved in political and financial issues. Finally, all twenty

participants are from the Chinese mainland, particularly the coastal provinces of Shandong, Shanghai and Fujian. The analysis and representation are largely dependent on information obtained from these participants, along with my own. The sample might not be sufficient enough to provide a comprehensive understanding of the entire local Chinese diasporic group, which also include migrants from other provinces and countries with a Chinese background. Furthermore, as Clifford (1994, p. 313) argues, diasporic experiences are “always gendered;” the analysis bypassed the differences between male and female perceptions of nature as part of the diasporic process of adjustment.

Regarding the results of the research, prospective studies could extend my findings in the following ways. The education of subsequent diasporic generations is an important aspect of this project because education is the mode through which young newcomers and the Australian-born Chinese can learn about the local environment and contribute to the aims of regional sustainability. In an interview with Helen, for example, she mentioned that at her school in Yokine, Perth, environmental protection is highly emphasised as part of the curriculum. Students are encouraged to grow native plants and common vegetables in the school (N4, H. Wang, personal communication, November 16 2014). Subsequent research could investigate environmental education for Chinese diasporans and, in particular, the methods most effective for teaching Chinese diasporans about the local environment, perhaps employing traditional concepts, such as Feng Shui. In addition, further intensive education about the local natural environment, such as the habitat of abalone, will become increasingly important to diasporic place, particularly if populations of abalone suffer from the seasonal dislocations caused by climate change (Ogston, Beatty, Morgan, Pusey, & Lymbery, 2016). In abalone harvesting, many people return the undersized abalone to the sea. Only a few harvesters know that abalone cannot survive if it is upside-down, even in the sea.

Another consideration for further research could be in sensory ethnographic studies, paying more attention to the other senses and the emotions in understanding the dynamic relations between place, space and people, not merely limited in diasporic groups. Moreover, the ideas of dialogism and exchange between diasporic culture and the environment might be applied to future studies of other ethnic groups in Western Australia and, more broadly, in Australia. Subsequent researchers in the

environmental humanities and other inter-disciplines could investigate how diasporic cultures are transformed in relation to particular natural, cultural and social networks.

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Code	Name	Occupation	Interview Date
N1 (nature)	Zhao Wei	University Student	5 Nov 2014
N2	Richard Wang	Antique collector and tradesman	16 Nov 2014
N3	Ada Wang	Wang's wife (Accountant)	
N4	Helen Wang	Richard & Ada's daughter (age 15)	
A1	Duan Xin	Director of Shandong Association	22 Nov 2014
N5	Li Hong	Wife (housewife)	
N6	Yang Linlin	Sales manager	29 Nov 2014
N7	Zhao Ying	Yang Linlin's husband	
N8	Jane Zhao	Yang & Zhao's Daughter (age 16)	
N9	Kate Zhao	Yang & Zhao's Daughter (age 14)	
N10	Nicole Zhao	Yang & Zhao's Daughter (age 11)	
A1 (abalone)	Duanxin	Business owner	10 Jan 2015
A2	Lu Fang	Restaurant owner	
A3	Billy Han	Risk assessment consultant	
A4	Tommy Zhan	Colliery engineer	
A5	Sun Fengyong	Colliery engineer	
N11	Richard Li	PhD student	28 Jan 2015
G1 (garden)	Hu Xueyou	Welder	14 Mar 2015
G2	Chen Fen	Hu's wife (Chocolate factory staff)	
G3	Sun Lanhua	Welder	17 May 2015
A6	Yang Chunlong	Master Chef	20 Apr 2015
N12	Li Lijun	Yang's wife (customer services)	
N13	Yang Fan	Yang & Li's daughter (age 16)	
W1 (wine)	Linquan Fan	Wine company owner	15 May 2015
W2	Max Sun	Sales manager	
W3	Tony Huang	Sales manager	

APPENDIX 2. INFORMATION LETTER FOR INTERVIEWS

Li Chen
School of Communications and Arts
Edith Cowan University
2 Bradford Street
Room 17.206
Mount Lawley, Western Australia 6050
Lchen3@our.ecu.edu.au
0412868538

Dear ____:

You have been invited to participate in a research project *Chinese diasporic culture and Western Australian nature: A case study of interspecies relationships and human-nature dynamics* led by Edith Cowan University researcher Li Chen. The purpose of the project is to understand the interdependent relationships between diasporic cultures and changing natural environment. The project includes interviews with Chinese immigrant families, Chinese vegetable gardeners, local Chinese businessmen and fishermen. The project will result in written reports (PhD thesis and journal articles).

The interview will be informal and will take place in the field if you prefer. We can speak indoors, over the phone, or even by email. Although I allot 45 minutes, interviews can be longer or shorter depending on your interest or time constraints. I will record interviews with a small digital device.

The integrity of your information is my utmost concern. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the interview at any point. You will be properly acknowledged for your contribution to all outcomes in which your interview is cited. Also, you will be provided a transcript of your interview *within 6 weeks* to ensure accuracy.

It is important that you are aware that *parts of your interview may be included in a written report and online resource*. Furthermore, *parts of your interview may also be included in journal articles, conference presentations, creative writing pieces, or future book publications*. The information from the interviews will be retained for at least five years and possibly used in future relevant studies.

The project requires a signed consent form, which you will find at the back of this letter. Thank you very much for contributing to multicultural studies and cultural studies of nature.

If you wish to speak to someone (other than the researchers involved) about the project, please contact Kim Gifkins, Research Ethics Officer at Edith Cowan University, Edith Cowan University, 270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, WA 6027, (08) 6304 2170 or research.ethics@ecu.edu.au.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX 3. ADULT CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Project title: *Chinese diasporic culture and Western Australian nature: A case study of interspecies relationships and human-nature dynamics*

I agree to participate in an interview with Edith Cowan University researcher, Li Chen (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that my participation in the project is voluntary, and that I can withdraw my involvement at any point (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that parts of the interview could be included in written reports, in thesis, journal articles or conference presentations (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that parts of the interview could be recorded by video or audio devices or camera and presented in thesis or future creative works, such as a film documentary (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I am willing to remain identified by my name in written reports, the online archive, conference presentations or other published items (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that information from the interview will be retained for at least five years and possibly used in other projects after this project is complete (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

INTERVIEW LOCATION: _____, Perth, WA

DATE: _____

PARTICIPANT'S NAME: _____

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE: _____

APPENDIX 4. CONSENT FORMS FOR CHILDREN AND GUARDIANS

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Project title: *Chinese diasporic culture and Western Australian nature: A case study of interspecies relationships and human-nature dynamics*

I agree to bring my child ____ to participate in an interview with Edith Cowan University researcher, Li Chen (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that my participation in the project is voluntary, and that I can withdraw my child's involvement at any point (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that parts of the interview could be included in written reports, in thesis, journal articles or conference presentations (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that parts of the interview could be recorded by video or audio devices or camera and presented in thesis or future creative works, such as a film documentary (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I would like my child to remain identified by his or her name and for images to be included in Li Chen's written reports, conference presentations or other published items (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I understand that information from the interview will be retained for at least five years and possibly used in other projects after this project is complete (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

INTERVIEW LOCATION: _____, Perth, WA

DATE: _____

PARENT'S NAME: _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN

Project title: *Chinese diasporic culture and Western Australian nature: A case study of interspecies relationships and human-nature dynamics*

I agree to join my family to have a talk with Li Chen (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I know the reasons for the talk (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I know the topic of the talk (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I know Li Chen will write down some parts of the talk and she will use the information in her study (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I am willing to have my photo taken or to be filmed during the talk (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

I would like my parents to make a decision for me about any other issues about the talk (*please check*)

☐ **Yes** or ☐ **No**

INTERVIEW LOCATION: _____, Perth, WA

DATE: _____

PARTICIPANT'S NAME: _____

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE: _____

PARENT'S NAME: _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

APPENDIX 5. FILM LOGLINE

This film is based on my ethnographic study of the interaction between the natural world of Perth and diasporic Chinese subjects. Throughout the study, I adopted an autobiographical point-of-view in order to relate my ethnographic observations to my personal experiences. I have examined the influences of the natural environment on the transformations in local Chinese people's perceptions of place and space.

The film starts with Sun's (the narrator's) first experience of the abalone harvest along the beaches north of Perth, WA. Although baoyu (abalone) is a traditional luxurious food source in Chinese culinary history and culture, most local Chinese people had not had experiences of harvesting it until they settled in Western Australia. Through the example of baoyu, the film encapsulates the main argument of my research and expresses the views of participants on the relationship between the Chinese diaspora and the Perth environment. Therefore, the film does not merely document Sun's story, but also presents insight into the lives of the Chinese community. The film records their interactions with the natural world during their process of relocation and adjustment.

This film discloses common diasporic practices that involve close sensory engagement with the natural world of Perth. It is about the relationships between ecology and the human world, and between the natural world and traditional cultures. Diasporic culture is interdependent with the agency of natural resources such as abalone.

APPENDIX 6. FILM DRAFT (BAOYU)

Subtitle

7:00 am to 8:00 am, the first Sunday of November 2014

On the beach of Marmion Marine Park, Perth, Western Australia

Fade out

Footage

Many people are fishing abalone. Some are in the water and searching while some are standing on the beach, watching and waiting.

Narration

My name is Sun. I came from Shanghai. In Australia, most people call me “Sun”. Interestingly, Perth is the sunniest city in Australia.

I have been in Perth, Western Australia, for nearly eight years. This is my first time fishing abalone. Duan is a new friend I just met in Perth. He’s a real expert in fishing abalone. During the last ten years, he has harvested abalone every fishing season.

Footage

Duan teaches Sun how to harvest.

Narration

All the friends I know from fishing are from Shandong, a seaside province in North China. However, many have had no experience of harvesting abalone before, like me. It’s amazing to see live abalone under the water. But fishing is a big challenge for all of us. Only when you standing in the water do you realize how dangerous the job is.

Footage

Pushed by big waves, some people fall down. Some are covered by the waves.

Narration

One hour of fishing time is not enough for novices. The first time, I took eight abalones. Duan only spent ten minutes to get the maximum amount of fifteen. In the remaining time, he taught us how to find abalone under the waves.

Footage

Harvesting and learning

Subtitle

8:00am, end of fishing time

Narration

Time goes quickly. At eight o'clock, everyone came out of the water. The beach became quiet again. It is hard to believe how busy it was here during the last hour. Only the fishery officers are still working.

Narration

Fishery officers are investigating people suspected of breaking the rules of the harvest.

Fade out

Narration

In China, and also in many Asian countries, abalone is very expensive. Chinese people believe it is full of nutrition. I think another reason that abalone is a delicacy is that the wild stock has declined due to global environmental changes.

Actually, for me, abalone tastes like other mussels. In Shanghai, I tried it several times in restaurants with my family. I never knew it could be cooked at home as it is so expensive in China.

Footage

Duan teaches Sun how to cook abalone porridge.

Narration

Every summer begins with fishing season but fishing crabs is more popular with Chinese people. Crab trapping is so attractive because the fishing time is flexible and usually at night. Unlike abalone harvesting, it is also safe. Everyone can join in it.

Footage

Fishing crabs with Duan at mid-night in Como

Fade out

Footage

Celebration for Chinese New Year in Northbridge and China Town, 2015

Narration

In Perth, summer is always busy. The Chinese New Year is an important festival for all local Chinese people. Now it is a celebration even for some Anglo-Australian residents.

Narration

Perth is known as the remotest city in the world. It takes three and a half hours flying to go to the nearest major city Adelaide. Although it is closer to China, compared to Sydney and Melbourne, there are fewer Chinese people here. In recent years, more Chinese restaurants have emerged. I know a master chef, Yang, from Shanghai. He works in a Chinese restaurant in Mandurah, a famous seaside town south of Perth.

Footage

Yang cooks abalone dishes in the restaurant.

Narration

Abalone is not popular in the local Chinese restaurants of WA. Yang feels there is no opportunity here to show off his talents. Since abalone can be harvested in the sea and it is a simple dish to prepare at home, local Chinese people are not interested in ordering abalone at a restaurant.

Footage

Yang is serving a few customers.

Fade out

Narration

Yang's cooking is fabulous. But gradually, my interest is turning from eating abalone to the excitement of the harvest. After a few times, I began to enjoy the activity. To me, it is more like an outdoor sport. I appreciate the beautiful coastal scenery, practice my fishing skills and experience the joys of harvesting wild abalone in the ocean.

Footage

fishing process with a full view of the coastline

Narration

The environment in Western Australia is totally different from most regions in China. Similar to other Chinese people living here, at the beginning, I felt the place was deserted and boring. However, through my engagement in local life, I began to love the city. The natural world is colorful and intimate.

Footage

Kings Park Wild Flower Festival (September, 2015)

Birds singing in the park

Narration

Spring is the most beautiful season in WA. After a rainy and humid winter, the flowers restore natural colors to the city, making everything appear vivid.

Footage

Araluen Botanic Park (October, 2015)

Narration

The colors of nature continue with the season's changes. At the end of spring, jacaranda flowers come out.

Footage

Jacaranda Festival in Applecross (November, 2015)

Footage

Wine tasting with local Chinese people

Narration

Living in Perth, living with the natural world, I have had so many new experiences.

Narration

I was surprised by the vast vineyard valley. I was encouraged by backyard gardening. I was moved by the coastal cultures. The natural world of Western Australia fascinates me. I am Sun. I am from Perth.

Footage

Recalling local experiences (pictures and footage), returning to the abalone harvest (featuring underwater abalone and big waves)

Fade out

APPENDIX 7. DIGITAL VIDEO DISK

Not included in repository version of the thesis